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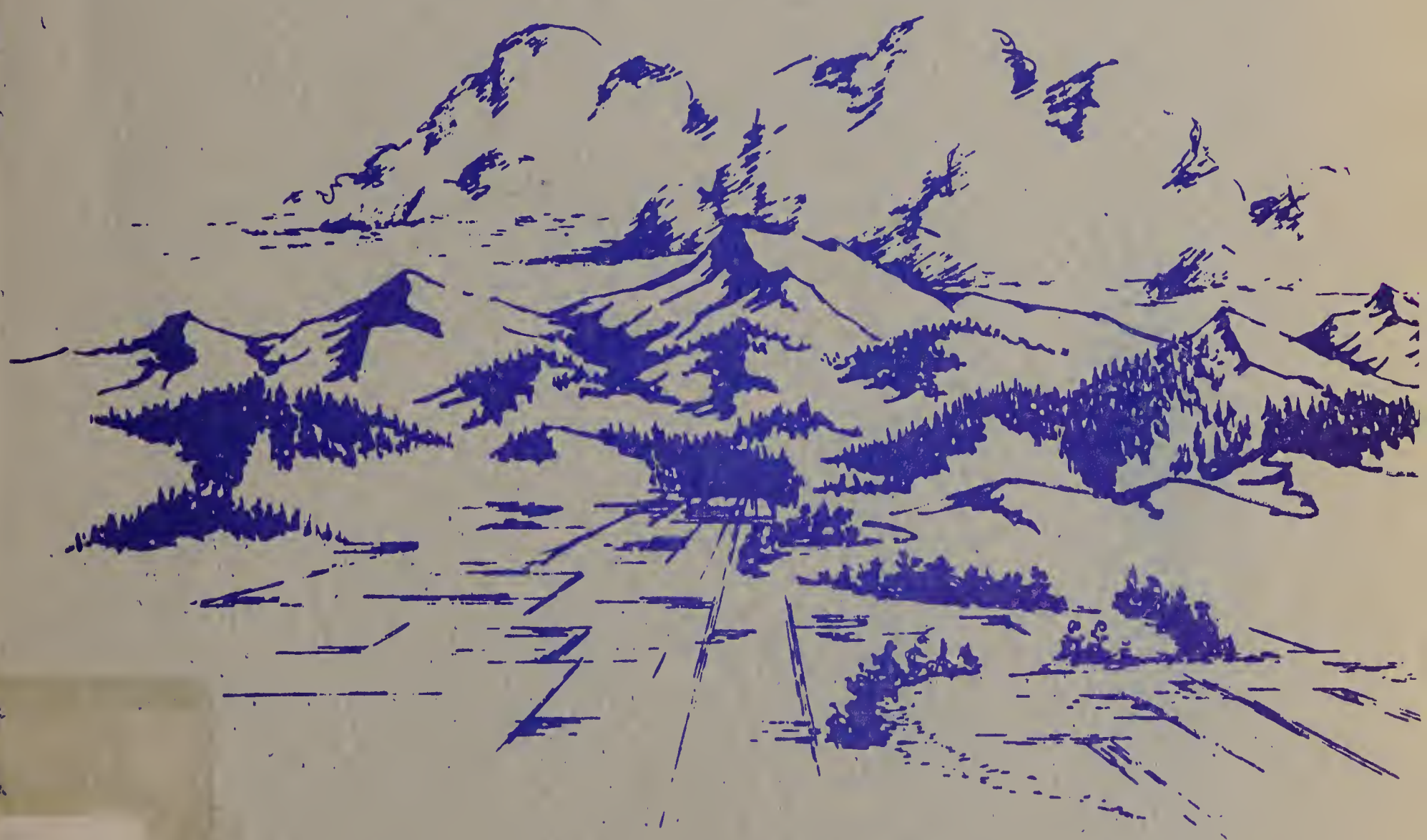
They Didn't Come In Four-Wheel Drives:

An Introduction to Fortymile History

By: Terry L. Haynes
Bureau of Land Management — Tok, Alaska



Resources Development Internship Program
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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THEY DIDN'T COME IN FOUR-WHEEL DRIVES:

AN INTRODUCTION TO FORTYMILE HISTORY

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Prepared For

Bureau of Land Management
Fortymile Resource Area
Tok, Alaska 99780

by

Terry L. Haynes
September, 1976

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ABSTRACT

During the summer of 1976, the Bureau of Land Management, Fortymile Resource Area, Alaska, began an extensive cultural resources inventory as an integral feature of its future program planning. One aspect of this inventory focused on the oral and written history of the Fortymile area, which is currently not well-documented. An oral history project was initiated, with long-time residents of the Fortymile district providing historical and other information relevant to Fortymile history.

This report has drawn upon information derived from personal interviews, as well as that from written sources. While it is both general and incomplete in many respects, this report is intended to serve as a foundation for future Fortymile historical research. An extensive bibliography has been included to aid those interested in learning more about the various aspects of Fortymile history.

Recommendations for future research are made, in the hope that more oral history is recorded while the human resources are readily available, and that the rich and important history of the Fortymile Resource Area is preserved for others to enjoy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This oral history project was made possible through the combined efforts of BLM Fortymile Resource Area personnel and many residents of the Fortymile region. Special thanks are extended to all who contributed to this pilot endeavor in any way. Major contributions were made by the following persons:

Fred Whitehead, Fred and Millie Terwilliger, Al and Roberta Stout, Art Purdy, Anne Purdy, Knut Peterson, Andy Peterson, Billy Meldrum, Bob and Molly McCombe, Engbret and Mary Johansen, Barney and Ole Hansen, Wyman Fritsch, Paul Bytell, and Alice Bayless, all expressed special interest in the project and volunteered important historical information. Without their assistance this project would not have been possible.

Jay Thatcher, T. David Williams, and Steve Peterson, current and former BLM personnel, all assisted in much less visible ways. They designed the general research plan and handled the logistics which permitted more efficient use of the short time available for fieldwork. Special thanks are extended to Marsha Sakalaskas and Vicky Brinkman, who typed the final draft of this report and assisted in many other ways.

Elva Scott, John Borg, Sarge and Louise Waller, and Anton and Esther Merley - all active in the Eagle Historical Society - made available numerous materials for use in this report.

Four fellow WICHE interns conducted projects in the Fortymile Resource Area and enhanced my perspective of the region in various ways. Wendell Bell and Mike Sullivan conducted an extensive historic cabin inventory along the Fortymile River and its main tributaries. I accompanied them on one raft trip and had an excellent guided tour of places referred to by many of my informants. Cam Lockwood and Jim Bell, both outdoor recreation resource planners, are interested in seeing that the area retains its historical flavor, in spite of major recreational development planning now occurring along the Taylor Highway. Jim Bell also prepared several maps (Figures 3 to 8) which are included in this report.

I had hoped to include photographs of all informants in this report, but certain delays prevented this. However, photos of most informants have been placed on file at BLM Fortymile Resource Area Headquarters.

Terry L. Haynes

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All that is necessary to make this country [Fortymile Mining District] second to none is more YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN. The gold is here for the seeking, and its climatic conditions are as good and better than some sections of Alaska. We look forward to the time when it will be surrounded with prosperity, for it is a country with a future.

Alaska Weekly
July 17, 1925

I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fortymile Resource Area, Alaska, is currently conducting a cultural resources inventory as an integral feature of its future program planning in eastern interior Alaska. The Fortymile Resource Area (see Figures 1 and 2) is the location of several noteworthy historic events, including the site of the first gold discovery in interior Alaska. In addition, the Washington-Alaska Military and Cable Telegraph System (WAMCATS), Alaska's first direct communication link with the rest of the United States, constructed between 1900 and 1904, passes through the Fortymile Area. Furthermore, several Athapaskan Indian groups have been associated with the region for many years, and many of their descendants currently reside in villages in the periphery of the Fortymile Area.

Of particular significance is the interest shown by BLM personnel in recording much of this history as it relates to their program planning, as well as for the benefit of members of the communities within and surrounding the Fortymile Resource Area. Much of the history has occurred within the lifetimes or memories of long-time residents, both white and native, and some were associated with the first permanent residents of the region, who arrived in the late 19th century. Since the written history of the Fortymile district is conspicuous by its incomplete nature, pioneers of the region can contribute vital perspectives to the written record, while adding information not previously recorded that might be forgotten if not preserved during their lifetimes. This project is designed, in part, to preserve the recollections of those long-time residents of the Fortymile district who wish to share their memories and permit them to be made available for the enhancement of future generations.

II. Role of Oral History

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to America's heritage and major efforts have been made to preserve many remnants of the past. Energies in this respect are normally channelled into the preservation and restoration of old buildings and historic sites, as they often fall prey to urban renewal projects and enterprising land developers. In other instances, vandals and collectors damage or steal many artifacts and other items of historical significance. Even with the support of federal grants, private foundations, public interest groups, and concerned citizens, much of America's irreplacable heritage is destroyed annually.

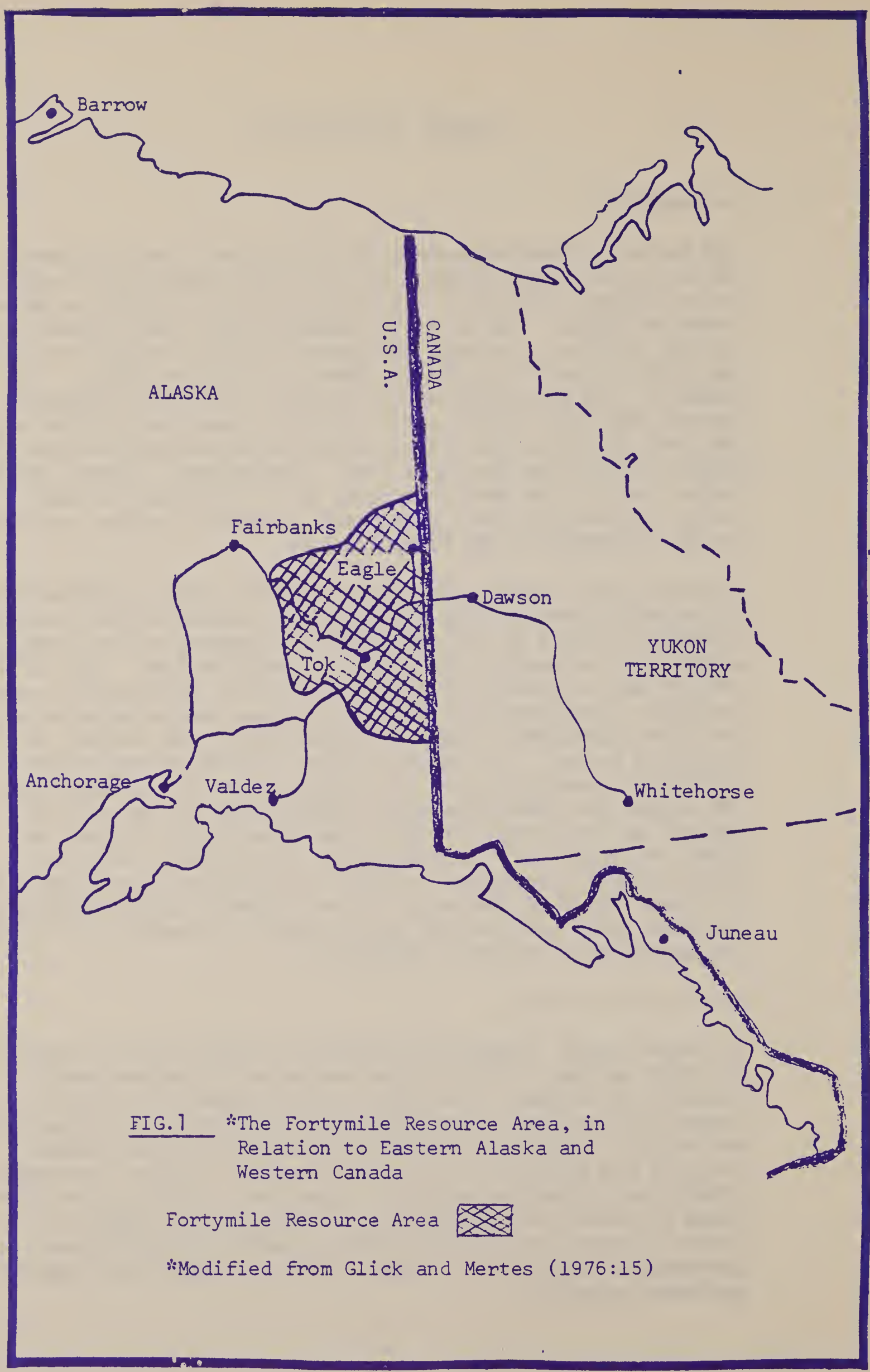


FIG.1 *The Fortymile Resource Area, in Relation to Eastern Alaska and Western Canada

Fortymile Resource Area

*Modified from Glick and Mertes (1976:15)

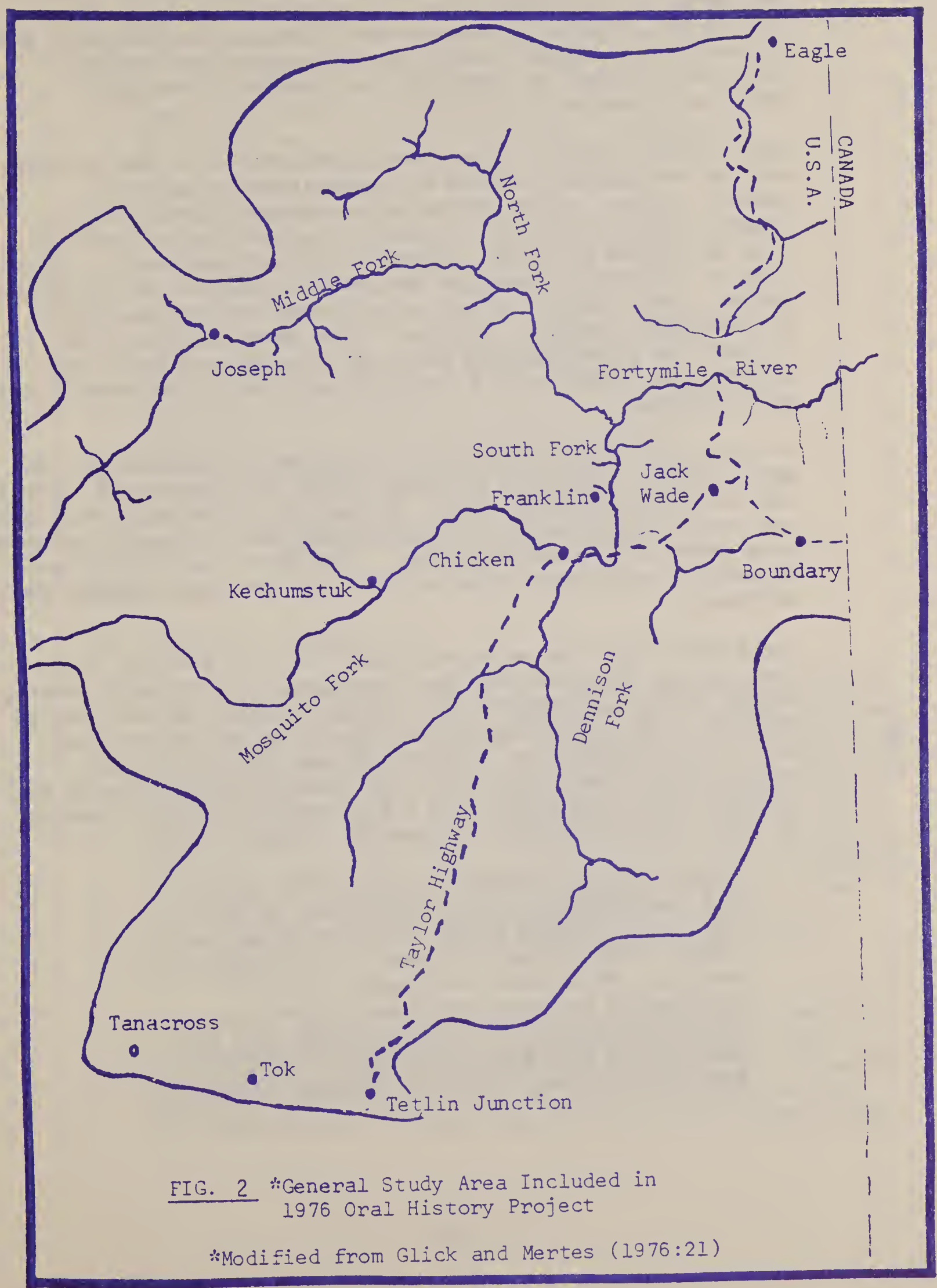


FIG. 2 *General Study Area Included in 1976 Oral History Project

*Modified from Glick and Mertes (1976:21)

Oral history is often overlooked as a contributing factor to historical preservation and restoration programs for a variety of reasons, none of which pose insurmountable problems. It is unfortunate that the wealth of information retained by pioneer residents of most communities in the United States is often overlooked, especially where historic preservation programs are in progress. Written history rarely captures the richness, color, and variety of America's past, which is frequently retained by senior citizens.

Oral history should be given more consideration in the planning and implementation of historic preservation projects for several reasons. Older members of a community are likely to remember certain activities related to a particular historic site which have not been included in the written record. This type of information enhances the overall value of the preservation project, and helps to make it more interesting and meaningful to the general public. Finally, it is important that older citizens be given the opportunity to provide more input into projects which deal with a time period in which they were active participants.

Unfortunately, many people have not gained an appreciation for oral history, viewing it as being incidental, laden with "untruths", and of little practical value. History is filled with uncertainties and conflicting versions of many events, which, in many instances, have grown to be accepted as fact. How drab a world this would be were it not for the uncertainties and variations in America's heritage.

The author finds his own appreciation for life enhanced to a great extent by having had the opportunity to visit with elderly people in various communities in which he has lived and studied. Whether or not one agrees with another's beliefs or attitude, much is to be gained by listening to what they have to say. Perhaps George Ewart Evans has best summarized the value of oral history in the introduction to a book dealing with the remnants of early life in an English community (1969a:13-14):

> During the past fifty or so years the life of the countryside has been revolutionized and the rate of change within this period has been greater than it has ever been in recorded history...At present, old people in this countryside are survivors from another era. They belong essentially to a culture that has extended in unbroken line since at least the early Middle Ages. They are in some respects

the last repositories of this culture; and for this reason should have some of the respect given to any source of valuable historical information. Their knowledge of dialect, folk tales and songs, old customs and usages, and craft vocabularies and their ability to identify and describe the use of farm implements are sufficient reasons why they should have the local historian's greatest attention. That this attention is urgent is too obvious to need stressing and if, as often happens, the local historian--with limited time and means at his disposal--has to choose between helping to dig out a site and collecting oral information in his town or village, it is to be hoped that he will choose the less popular and in many ways the more exacting task. For an unexcavated site after waiting in the soil for perhaps a couple of thousand years will not suffer from the neglect of a few more; while the sort of knowledge that is waiting to be taken down from the old people is always on the brink of extinction. Tomorrow may be too late; and once this knowledge is under the soil no amount of digging will ever again recover it.

III. Methodology

A. Sources of Information

The information presented in this report has been collected from several sources, with an emphasis being placed on those materials obtained in personal interviews, from BLM personnel, and through the Eagle, Alaska Historical Society. Informants participating in the project were those having spent either most or all of their lives in the Fortymile area, and who were willing to contribute both their time and recollections. The short time period allocated for fieldwork did not permit all potential informants to be contacted, and it is hoped that others will have the opportunity to share their recollections in the future as the oral history project proceeds.

It must be regretfully noted that two potential informants passed away during the course of fieldwork before they could be contacted, and another is in rapidly failing health. Two other long-time residents of the area passed away in 1975, taking with them much valuable historical information.

This should emphasize the critical nature of oral history research, and encourage BLM to complete unfinished work in this area without delay.

Pertinent information was found in the BLM files at the Fortymile Resource Area headquarters, which included published reports, xeroxed manuscripts, and information collected by former and current BLM employees having an interest in Fortymile history. Personal interviews conducted by this writer were designed to complement, rather than replicate available information, although some duplication could not be avoided.

Materials in the University of Alaska Library in Fairbanks were examined for their applicability and have been referred to whenever they complement primary sources of information. These materials include books written by Alaskan pioneers and others who have lived in the Fortymile-Yukon region, journal articles, and clippings from old newspapers. These materials, when not cited in the text, have been listed in the bibliography and made available at Fortymile Resource Area headquarters whenever possible.

The Eagle Historical Society made available materials in their files, which have been utilized whenever they complement other information. Some of these materials were not readily available in other locations, making the contribution of this group significant. The Eagle Historical Society illustrates what a community with an interest in local history can do about preserving it for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

B. Personal Interviews

A list of potential informants had been prepared by Fortymile Resource Area employees prior to the initiation of field activities. These included long-time residents of communities within and around the Fortymile Resource Area, both white and native. Since it was not possible to contact all potential informants, it was decided to seek out those most willing to share information, as well as those who were considered to be important resources because of their experiences, length of residence in Fortymile, and accessibility.

Native Athapaskan informants living in local village communities were not included in the list of informants with whom interviews were completed. The scope of this project was too broad to permit all the necessary formalities

which accompany cross-cultural research to be completed, especially in communities in which the researcher is not well known. Preliminary groundwork was completed, however, for visits to be made in local villages in the future, and it is hoped that native input remains a priority item for future stages of this project.

The author formulated the research design used in the fieldwork, after consulting with BLM personnel and determining the desired kinds of information. However, since this project was designed to provide a foundation on which to build, its scope was broad and loosely defined.

Whenever possible, interviews were tape-recorded, but this was an optional procedure. Several informants were willing to provide information, but preferred not to have their conversations recorded. In these situations, notes were handwritten--a procedure that lends itself to inaccuracies and incompleteness; taped interviews permitted more continuity in conversations, and could be reviewed as often as necessary following the interview. All taped interviews have been indexed for future reference, and placed on file at Fortymile Resource Area headquarters.

C. Cultural Resources Library

In addition to conducting personal interviews and compiling data for this report, some time was devoted to organizing historical materials in the Fortymile Resource Area files.

At the beginning of the summer, various materials (historic site reports, xeroxed articles, newspaper clippings, correspondence, and other reports) were organized somewhat haphazardly. An effort has been made to organize these materials in a central location and to catalog them for future reference and easier accessibility. As materials are added to this library, it is hoped that organizational methods will be improved. The author was somewhat frustrated to find materials missing at different intervals throughout the summer, and amazed to find new materials surfacing when time did not permit them to be utilized in this report.

Several historical tape recordings on file had been made with Fortymile residents in 1974 and 1975. Numerous recordings were made during the summer of 1976 and have been added to this collection. Tape indexes accompany the tapes made by the author, and will aid those who wish to listen to sections of, but not entire tapes. Many tape recorders

are equipped with counters which can be set at 000 and begin to count as the tape is played. The number at which discussion of new topics begins can be noted and recorded for future reference. An example of a tape index is presented below:

Paul Bytell
Tape 2 Side 1

003	Caribou
064	Effect of Taylor Highway on caribou
073	Hunting in Fortymile
096	Trapping in Fortymile
141	Kechumstuk
171	Joseph Village
182	A trapping custom
191	George Matlock
209	Suicide victim (Joe Brost's employee)
331	Dome Creek mining

This indicates some of the topics discussed on Tape 2, Side 1 of an interview with Paul Bytell. One can hear what Paul has to say about caribou from 003 to 064, and his recollection of George Matlock from 191 to 209. Since counters have not been standardized on all tape recorders, some variation must be noted between the actual numbers at which a topic is discussed, and the numbers in the index.

A final concern of the author was the organization of materials in such a manner that Fortymile historical research can be more efficiently conducted. Based on the foundation constructed from the research completed this summer and prior to it, further research should be more useful and less repetitive. In addition to the list of recommendations included in this report, other ideas, topical areas, and lists of prospective informants have been prepared for Fortymile Resource personnel to consider for inclusion in future stages of research into Fortymile history.

IV. Report Format

The primary purpose of this report is to explore some aspects of the history of the Fortymile Resource Area, focusing on information derived from personal interviews with long-time residents of the region. Not all topics can be covered in a report of this nature, nor can those subject areas be presented in great detail. Since the oral history project was a pilot undertaking, it scope was limited, and its intent primarily being to provide a foundation on which a more complete reconstruction of Fortymile history can be built.

An overview of more significant Fortymile history is presented at the outset, to provide a general orientation to the region. It is succeeded by a presentation of data obtained during the field research period, which encompasses a variety of topics including descriptions of Fortymile pioneers, trapping, communities and how they were named, and other features of life in the early days. The next section examines various aspects of change within the Fortymile Area and how informants in this survey perceive them. Next is a series of brief descriptions of the informants who so generously shared their recollections with the author. Finally, recommendations for future research as the collection of Fortymile history proceeds are outlined, in the hope that they can serve as useful guidelines to future researchers.

II

FORTYMILE HISTORY: A SYNOPSIS

No comprehensive history of the Fortymile region has been attempted in spite of the wealth of information and the scattering of materials and resources readily at hand. This area is quite important in the overall history of Alaska for several reasons: (1) It is the location of the earliest recorded gold strike in interior Alaska; (2) Athapaskan Indians have utilized resources in the region for many years and have, or had villages and temporary camps located within the general area; and (3) Several towns and communities with diverse backgrounds and histories lie within its boundaries, including Chicken, Eagle, and Tok.

This chapter will familiarize the reader with some of the history of the area, as recorded in published sources. Since the material provided is very general, the bibliography should be consulted for a variety of reference materials more comprehensive in nature.

A. Athapaskan Indians in the Fortymile Resource Area

Athapaskan Indians occupied the interior of Alaska many years before the arrival of European trappers, traders, miners, and missionaries. Ancestors of the contemporary Athapaskans crossed over the Bering Strait into what is now Alaska about 10,000 B.C., with some groups continuing their trek into what is now the northwestern and southwestern United States. By 8,000-6,000 B.C. those remaining in Alaska had adapted to a subarctic forest environment in the interior not unlike the one they occupy today (Vanstone 1974:5). Athapaskan groups most generally referred to as the Tanana, Upper Tanana, Han, and Kutchin, have most recently resided in the general area that included the Fortymile River and its tributaries (refer to Osgood's map in Vanstone 1974:16).

A semi-nomadic hunting and gathering people, the Athapaskans traditionally had no permanent villages, being reliant on a variety of plant and animal resources spread over a large territory for their subsistence. The Fortymile River region was traversed by the natives in their quest for game, and by those enroute to trading posts located in the vicinity of the Yukon River (Bowers et al 1975). Caribou, moose, and other large game animals formed the basis of Athapaskan diet in the Fortymile region, with fish, roots, berries, birds, and small game animals providing seasonal variation and serving as alternative sources of food when large animals were scarce (Vanstone 1974:26-27).

That the Athapaskans established the now abandoned settlements of Kechumstuk and Joseph Village in the Fortymile district attests to the importance of resources in that locale. Located on Mosquito Fork at the mouth of Kechumstuk Creek, Kechumstuk is reported to have been a wintering place for as many as 320 native people. Joseph is located on the Middle Fork at the mouth of Joseph Creek and may have housed 200 people during the winter months (Alaska Planning Group 1973:75-76).

As is normally the case with nomadic hunting and gathering peoples, the Athapaskans were totally reliant on their environment for survival. Thus they utilized all available sources of material for clothing and moccasins, while logs, moss, and skins were used in the construction of dwellings, canoes, sleds, and some implements. It must be emphasized that the Athapaskans lived pretty much in balance with their environment, as their seasonal migrations to and from food sources tended to prevent the mismanagement of resources in a given region.

Athapaskans in the Fortymile region have been exposed to European culture since the mid-1800's, if not longer. Their earliest contacts were with explorers, trappers, and traders, and when Hudson's Bay Company established a post at Fort Yukon, north of the Yukon River in 1847 (Vanstone 1974:96) Athapaskan groups soon were trading furs for items of European manufacture on a regular basis. At this time (1847), the Han established themselves as aggressive traders and became more reliant on European trade goods, such as metal implements, muskets, tobacco, and imported foodstuffs (Grauman ND:3). Outlets for Christianity and the discoveries of gold in the Yukon River region lured more Europeans into the area in later years, with this population influx contributing significantly to the decline of traditional Athapaskan culture and the exploitation of both the natives and their resources.

> With the advent of the Gold Rush period, villagers from small upstream communities (such as Joseph and Kechumstuk) gradually migrated downstream to participate in the cash/barter economy offered them by supplying food for the thousands of prospectors servicing steamboat wood requirements, and the expanding need for more fur.
>
> During the Gold Rush period changes in lifestyle took place. The impact of feeding up to 700 prospectors and miners in the Fortymile area made wildlife resources hard to find.

> Big game animals were harvested to the extent that populations were almost extirpated. The indiscriminate use of fire also severely affected wildlife numbers and distribution. Fish became the mainstay of the Native diet. Stream valleys and hillsides were dug up, new settlements made and formal transportation routes evolved for the movement of men, mail, and supplies.
>
> The Fortymile River and its gold occupied a pivotal place in these events (Alaska Planning Group 1973:41).

Consequently, contemporary Athapaskan culture differs markedly from that present prior to European contact. The nomadic lifestyle is absent and most are reliant on wage income and other sources of livelihood, although many complement this revenue with hunting and trapping activities. European housing, clothing, and modes of transportation have replaced those used traditionally, while many Athapaskans attend or have attended both Christian churches and government or public schools (refer to Osgood 1970:170-174 for a summation of culture change among the Kutchin).

Nevertheless, some features of the traditional kinship and social systems persist, although frequently in a less structured fashion. The increasing mobility of the people and impact of other Euroamerican lifestyle influences have left their impression on visible social institutions. It is probable that less visible intricacies of traditional social systems remain more or less intact, but these are not commonly recognized by outsiders; Geudon (1974) illustrates the complexities of an Upper Tanana group's social life in a recent publication, many features of which are not likely to be understood by persons outside the local community.

Perhaps the most visible remnants of traditional Athapaskan culture are the use of their native language (although English is spoken by a majority of the people), their superb native crafts (leathercrafts, birch bark basketry, cradle boards, and beadwork), and the potlatch, a traditional ceremonial activity which persists as a dominant feature within the cultural framework.

A potlatch can be given for a variety of reasons, although one always occurs whenever there is a death in a village. Potlatches can also mark the first killing of a game animal by a young man, the accomplishment of an unusual deed, recovery from a serious

illness, or as payment for having committed an offense or violating a rule (Guedon 1974:204). The public distribution of goods is the primary feature of Athapaskan potlatches, although feasting and dancing are also important aspects of these ceremonials.

This brief introduction to Athapaskan culture in the Fortymile region is superficial and inadequate in many respects, but it is merely intended to acquaint the reader with the original inhabitants of eastern interior Alaska. The Athapaskans are fundamental to any history of the region, and were instrumental to the growth and development of this area. More than one early settler in Fortymile learned how to survive by observing native activities, or from learning directly from them; many have maintained friendly relations with local Athapaskans to this very day. It is unfortunate that others less charitable elected to exploit them and their resources, and to force alien ways on their culture.

B. Fortymile Mining History

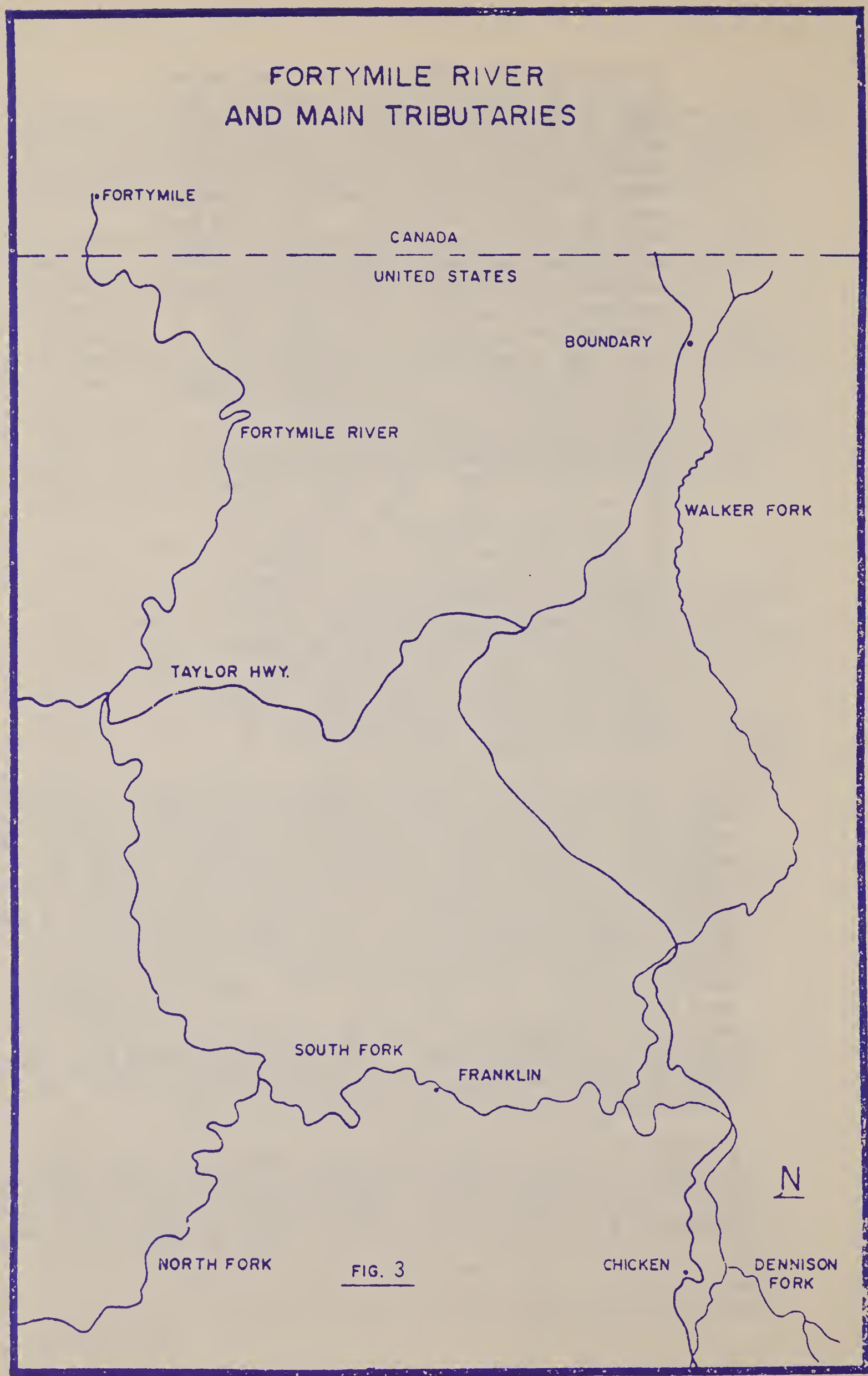
Fur trappers and traders paved the way for prospectors to enter the Fortymile district. Although the Fortymile River region will not be remembered as one of the richest gold mining regions in North America, it was the scene of the earliest activity in the interior of Alaska. As early as 1881, successful gold prospecting occurred in the region, when Arthur Harper, a well-known trader in the Yukon, and a Mr. Bates found samples of ore and gravel on the North Fork which were later assayed at $20,000 a ton. Harper attempted to relocate the area of his discovery the following year, but his landmark had been altered by the spring thaw, thus thwarting his effort (Wharton 1972:106). Joe Ladue, a prospector who later became famous for purchasing the townsite of Dawson, Yukon Territory, examined gold-bearing quartz found by an Indian from Fortymile country in 1883 while visiting Francois Mercier at the Western Fur Company at David Camp (now Eagle Village). His efforts at finding either the Indian or the area in which the sample was found also failed (Grauman ND:7).

In the summer of 1886, Howard (Homer?) Franklin, a prospector from Juneau, entered the Fortymile country at the suggestion of Arthur Harper (Bowers et al 1975). Frank Buteau, another early prospector in the Fortymile region, indicated that Franklin and his party (Mr. Lambert, Mr. Madden or Madison, and Michael "Mickey" O'Brien) discovered gold on a bar on the Fortymile River in September, 1886, and staked a claim in the surrounding area (Buteau 1967:101). A year later the Franklin Gulch strike was made, thus beginning the Fortymile Gold Rush, which attracted miners from the Stewart River region in Yukon Territory, southern Alaska, and other places in the continental United States. Wharton (1972:118-119) described the Fortymile prospectors:

> In the days when Forty Mile was the center of life on the Yukon, the prospectors who came in were mostly experienced men, men who had peopled the camps of Colorado and Washington and British Columbia, who had been on the frontiers of America in Montana, Wyoming, and the Northwest. They were men who knew what it was to take care of themselves, who arrived on the Yukon with adequate supplies for a year and when these supplies ran low, knew how to get food from the wilderness, how to hunt and fish, how to build log cabins that would turn out the cold. They were men adjusted psychologically to the lonely winter nights, long periods of isolation, and the disappointment of barren holes and pans with no color. These were the men of the Liar's Club. They were the men of the miners' meetings who made their own laws, handled their own problems, decided their own justice. They were capable of providing their own simple entertainment and enjoyed the winter beauty when crystals of snow danced in the air like a spring hatch of mayflies, diffusing all the colors of the prism so the very night became alive with the flowing iridescence.

When news of the gold strike reached Arthur Harper, he decided that a trading post should be opened at the mouth of the Fortymile River. He relayed a message to his partner, LeRoy N. "Jack" McQuesten, who was in San Francisco purchasing supplies for their trading post at Ft. Reliance on the Yukon River southeast of the mouth of the Fortymile River. Upon McQuesten's return, he and Harper opened a branch of the Alaska Commercial Company (more commonly referred to as the AC Company) at the location suggested by Harper. As time passed, other people and businesses were attracted to the region, and a community soon developed around the trading post, which was appropriately named Forty Mile (Wharton 1972:108-109). This community served as a supply base for miners working up and down the Fortymile River and its tributaries (refer to Figures 3 thru 8).

A succession of gold discoveries followed the initial ones at Franklin, attracting more prospectors and miners into the Fortymile region. Davis Creek in 1888 and Poker Creek in 1889, both headwater tributaries of Walker Fork near the Canadian border,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AND MAIN TRIBUTARIES
FORTYMILE
CANADA
UNITED STATES
BOUNDARY
FORTYMILE RIVER
WALKER FORK
TAYLOR HWY.
SOUTH FORK
FRANKLIN
N
NORTH FORK
CHICKEN
DENNISON
FORK

FIG. 3

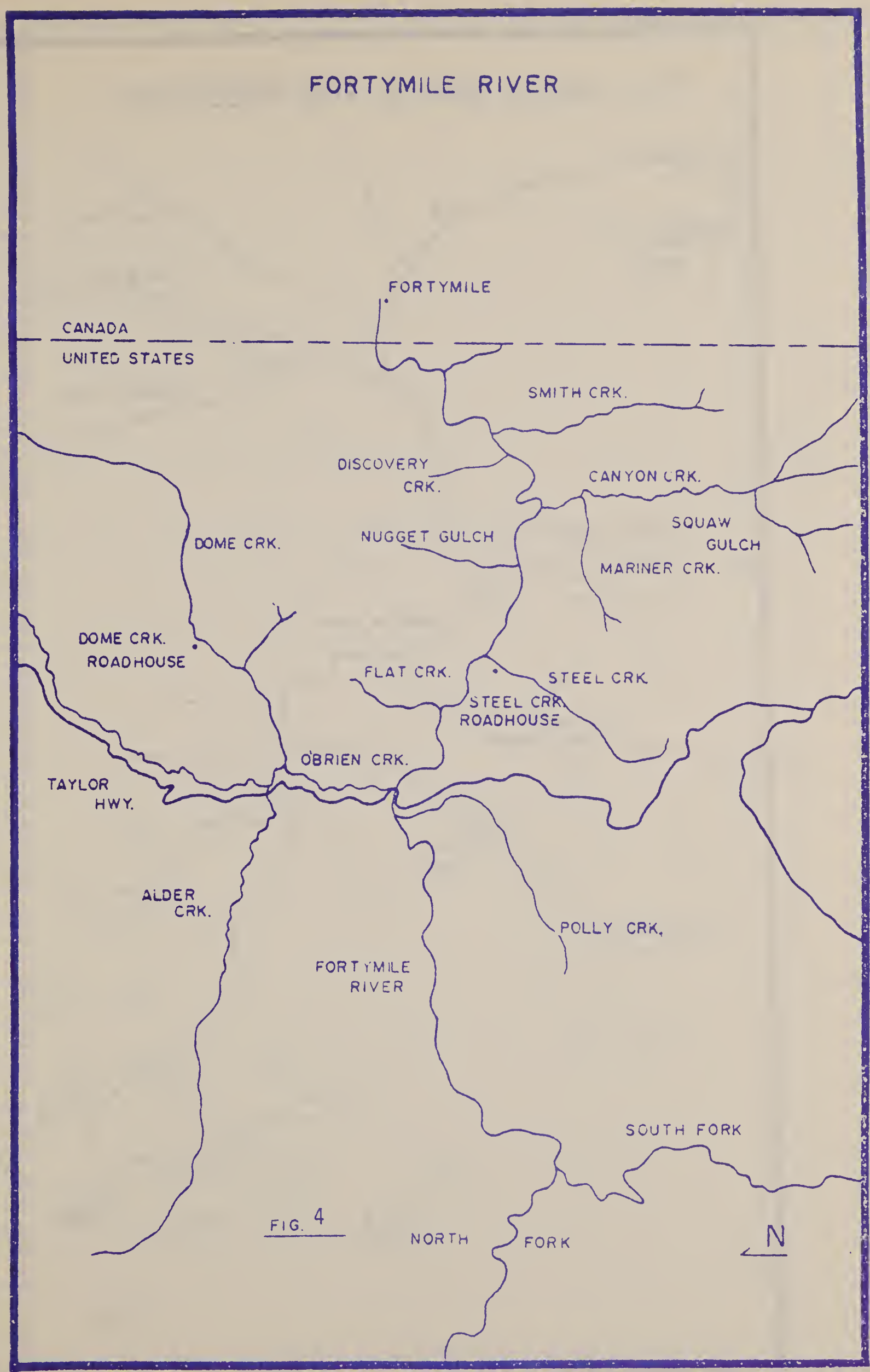
FORTYMILE RIVER
FORTYMILE
CANADA
UNITED STATES
SMITH CRK.
DISCOVERY CRK.
CANYON CRK.
SQUAW GULCH
MARINER CRK.
NUGGET GULCH
DOME CRK.
DOME CRK. ROADHOUSE
FLAT CRK.
STEEL CRK.
STEEL CRK. ROADHOUSE
O'BRIEN CRK.
TAYLOR HWY.
ALDER CRK.
POLLY CRK.
FORTYMILE RIVER
SOUTH FORK
NORTH FORK
N

FIG. 4

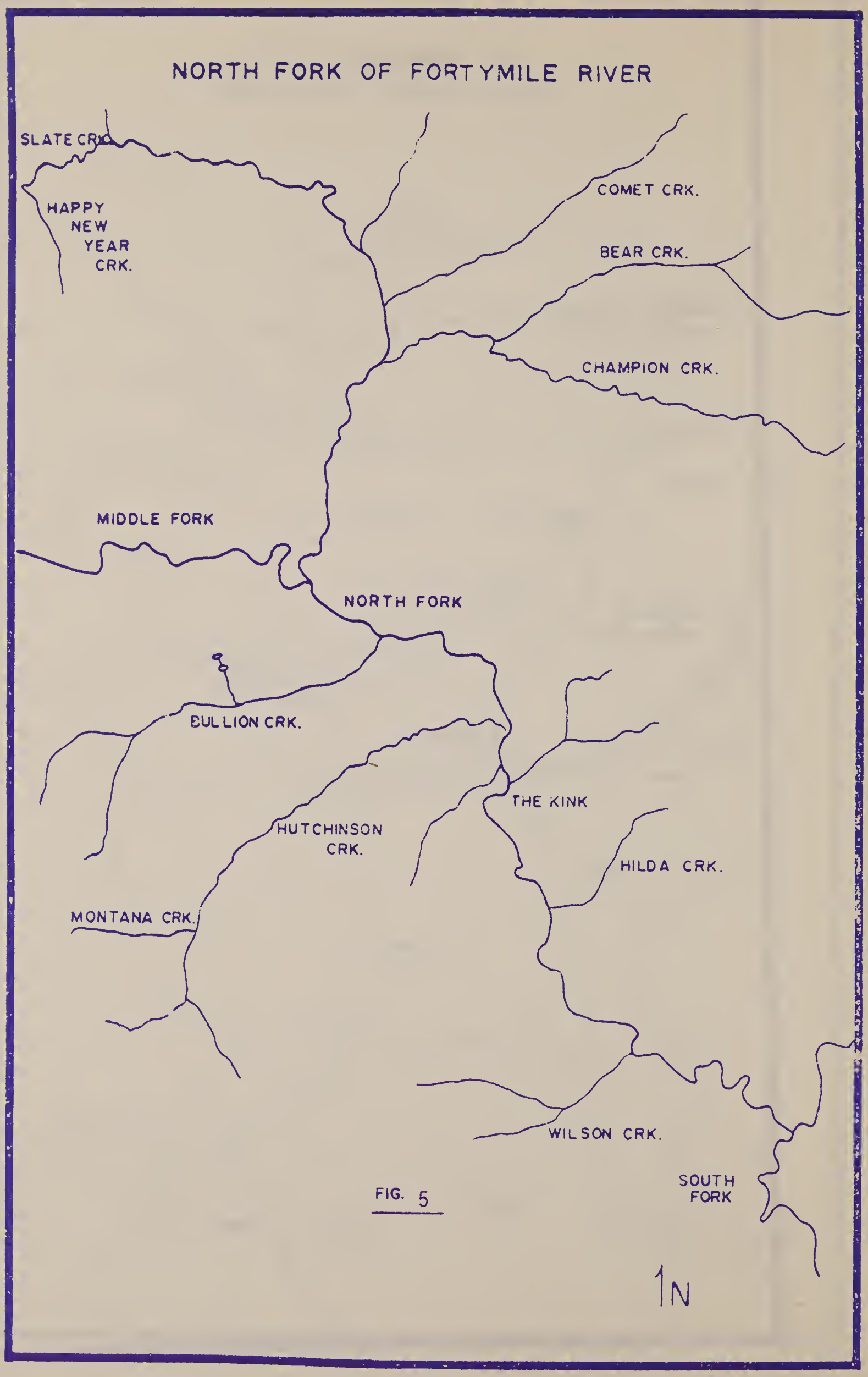
NORTH FORK OF FORTYMILE RIVER
SLATE CRK.
HAPPY NEW YEAR CRK.
COMET CRK.
BEAR CRK.
CHAMPION CRK.
MIDDLE FORK
NORTH FORK
BULLION CRK.
THE KINK
HUTCHINSON CRK.
HILDA CRK.
MONTANA CRK.
WILSON CRK.
SOUTH FORK
1N

FIG. 5

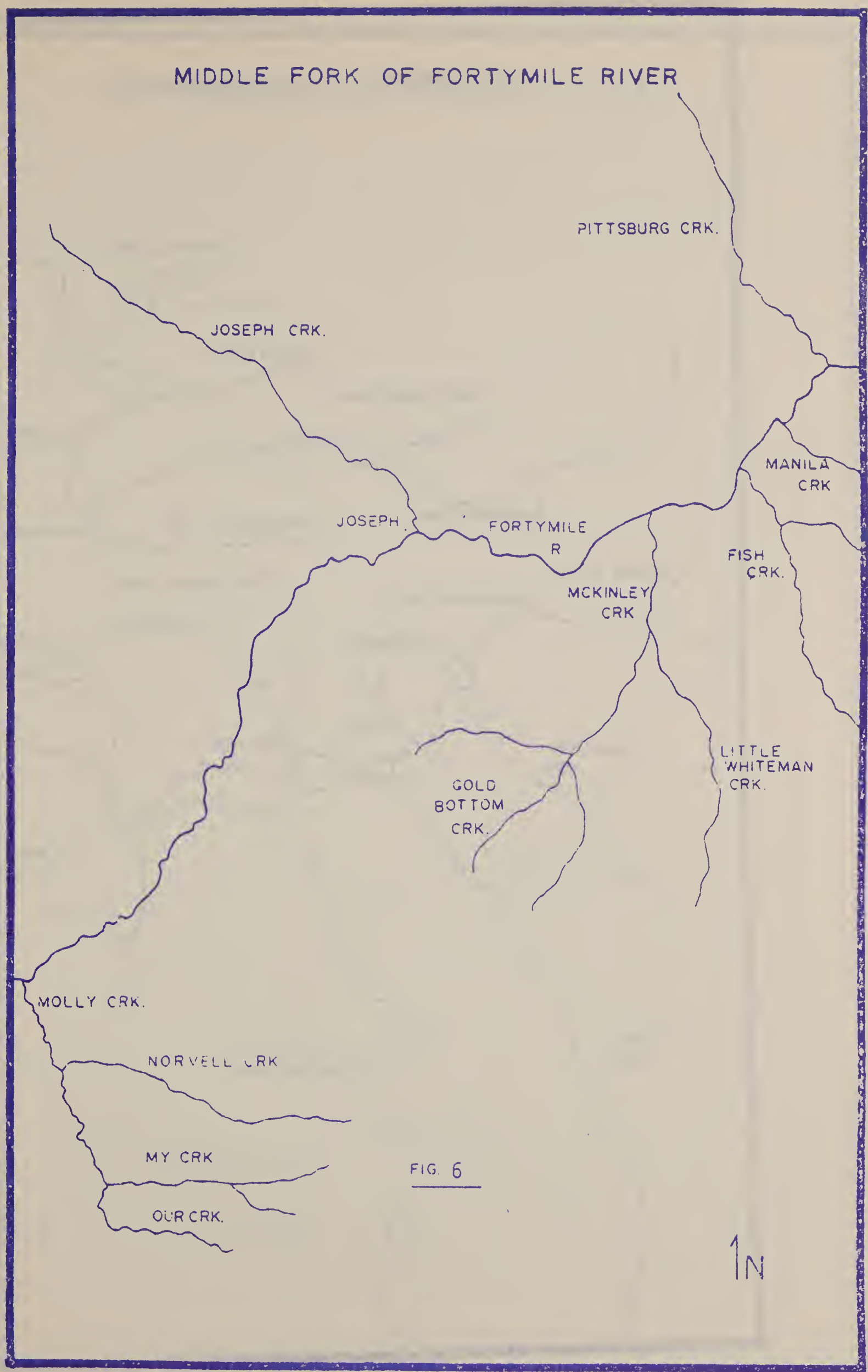
MIDDLE FORK OF FORTYMILE RIVER
PITTSBURG CRK.
JOSEPH CRK.
MANILA CRK
JOSEPH.
FORTYMILE R
FISH CRK.
MCKINLEY CRK
LITTLE WHITEMAN CRK.
GOLD BOTTOM CRK.
MOLLY CRK.
NORVELL CRK
MY CRK
OUR CRK.
N

FIG. 6

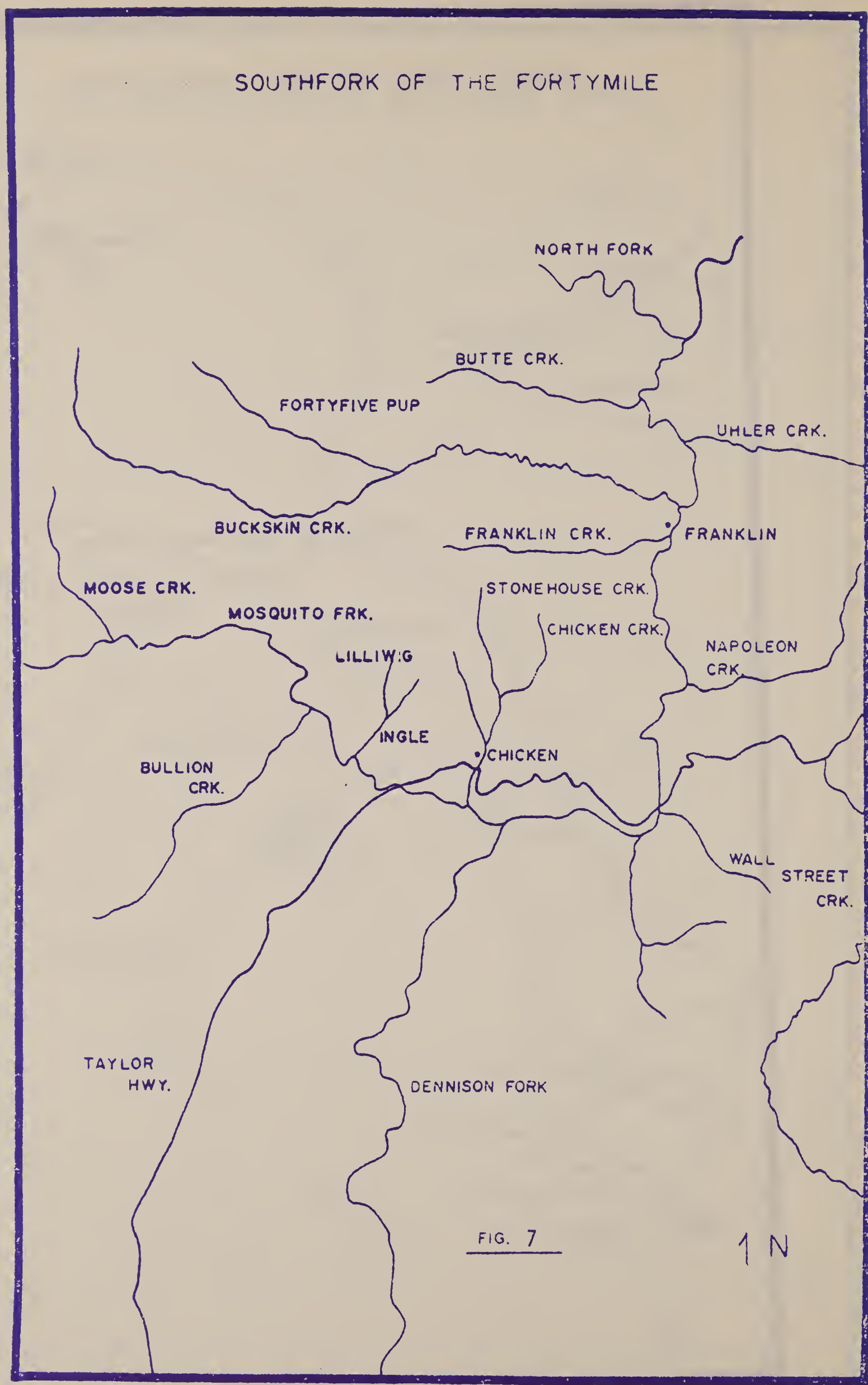
SOUTHFORK OF THE FORTYMILE
NORTH FORK
BUTTE CRK.
FORTYFIVE PUP
UHLER CRK.
BUCKSKIN CRK.
FRANKLIN CRK.
FRANKLIN
MOOSE CRK.
STONEHOUSE CRK.
MOSQUITO FRK.
CHICKEN CRK.
NAPOLEON CRK.
LILLIWIG
INGLE
CHICKEN
BULLION CRK.
WALL STREET CRK.
TAYLOR HWY.
DENNISON FORK
1 N

FIG. 7

KECHUMSTUK AND MOSQUITO FLATS

FIG. 8

1 N

were the sites of commercial gold placers. Discoveries east of the international boundary in 1892 on Miller and Glacier Creeks added to the influx of miners to the Fortymile region. Exact dates of other discoveries are not known, but it is known that mining on Dome Creek dates from 1893, on Wade Creek from 1895, and on Chicken Creek from 1896. Most, if not all discoveries were made within ten years after the stampede of 1893, and the Fortymile district was pretty thoroughly prospected before 1900 (Mertie 1938:157).

From 1887 to the early 1890's, the Fortymile district was the richest gold mining country in the Yukon valley, with about $400,000 taken out in 1894 alone. Small communities grew up around the heavily-mined creeks to provide the miners with mail service, food, and other supplies. Chicken, Franklin, Jack Wade, and Steel Creek are the best known of these, and became regular travel routes for those coming into Fortymile country for whatever reason. Most of the mining in the early days was done with picks, shovels, gold pans, rockers, and sluice boxes (Bowers et al 1975), and is commonly referred to as hand mining.

The prosperity of the Fortymile district was short-lived, as gold discoveries were made on Birch Creek, two hundred miles further down the Yukon in 1893, and in the Klondike River region near Dawson, Yukon Territory, in 1896. When news of these strikes reached the Fortymile region, which was already beginning to decline, many of the miners moved to these new locations, with the inevitable hope that mining would be more productive there.

The decline of mining in the Fortymile region in the late 1890's can be attributed to several factors. First, most of the ground had been prospected during the initial rush, and the best diggings intensively mined with the available hand methods. With some exceptions, this left only less desirable diggings for those who remained or entered later. Second, much of the formerly rich ground could no longer be profitably mined, given the short summers and long winters, which severely restricted the length of the mining season. Finally, as is often the case in the development of any mining industry, the introduction of improved methods for extracting gold from the ground were required to make mining a profitable venture.

A second wave of miners entered the Fortymile region in the 1900's, accompanied by refined methods for mining in that region. Steam-powered shovels, dredges, caterpillars, draglines, and bulldozers were able to cover more territory in a shorter time than the more simplistic hand methods. They could also operate in areas covered with heavy overburden, which could not be profitably mined before. While the 19th century mining was

done primarily by one man or a few men working together, 20th century methods were frequently corporate ventures, financed with money from large mining companies from the outside.

Mining operations were active in the Fortymile district until the early 1940's. Then, with the U.S. involvement in World War II, most mining activity ceased, and most of the heavy equipment diverted to assist in the war effort. For some unexplained reason, Fortymile mining never regained its momentum after World War II. It is probable that the economy was geared to other activities, and many of the former miners in the Fortymile district never returned. In recent years, however, a revival has occurred, partially as a result of the increased price of gold, and several active mining operations are present.

Even with the improved technology, 20th century mining in the Fortymile district remains dependent on the availability of water, which fluctuates from year to year. During the summer of 1976, for example, the water supply was inadequate in some areas until late in the summer to permit intensive mining to be done. Current mining methods also require substantially higher expenditures, given the rising fuel costs, as well as the investment in equipment, so the return must be proportionally higher to warrant continuation of mining operations.

Current mining operations are relatively few in number in the Fortymile district, although prospectors and tourists are attracted to the area during the summer months with the hope of finding gold. Suction dredges are utilized by many modern goldseekers to remove paydirt from the stream beds and river banks. These gasoline-powered devices operate in a manner similar to that of the large dredges which operated for many years in the region. While the chances of anyone making a rich strike are slight, the interest in seeking the elusive mother lode remains. Today's serious prospectors and miners consider gold mining in the region to remain profitable as long as the market price remains above $100 per ounce; but whatever the price, those with "gold fever" will always be attracted.

III

RECOLLECTIONS OF FORTYMILE PIONEERS

During the summer of 1976, long-time residents of the Fortymile region were contacted and asked to share their recollections of the early days. As the specific topics of interest had not been well-defined at the outset, the author decided to focus on several topical areas which seemed pertinent to any history of the region. Much more information was compiled than can adequately be dealt with in this brief report, but it is believed that the available information can provide some direction for those who continue the collection of oral histories in the Fortymile district.

Whenever possible, information from written sources accompanies information presented in this chapter, if it is necessary to clarify certain points, or contributes to a more thorough understanding of the topic. All published information is properly cited in the text, so it can be distinguished from that derived from personal interviews, or from the author's interpretations of information obtained from his informants. If the information presented appears sketchy and incomplete, it is because the available sources of information were likewise; in other instances, time constraints did not permit follow-up interviews to be completed, which might have eliminated some incomplete descriptions. In any event, the author assumes full responsibility for the information presented.

A. Earlyday Fortymile Residents

Many people have resided in the Fortymile district since the 1886 gold strike attracted outsiders to the region. Many remained only briefly, following other strikes as they occurred, while others from a variety of backgrounds, chose Fortymile as their permanent home. Some of those best-remembered by those participating in the oral history project are outlined here to give some indication of the composition of the Fortymile population in the late 1800's and early 1900's. This list is by no means inclusive; it is hoped more information on those people described, and descriptions of more people will surface in the future.

Ben Atwater: Local residents remembered very little about Atwater, except that he arrived in the very early days and mined on Atwater Bar. His background is detailed in the Alaska Weekly (July 31, 1925), and indicates that he was born in New York City sometime before 1850. He first entered Alaska around 1875,

left for a few years, and returned to the Yukon in 1885. Atwater's original discovery was at Atwater's Bar, placer diggings near Circle City, and it was said he did rather well while there.

Frank Buteau, one of the early Fortymile miners, mentioned Atwater in his recollection (1967:107):

> In 1889, two men, named Johnny Folger and Ben Atwater, started from Atwater Bar, just above Franklin Gulch, for the headwaters of the Tanana River. They used a sleigh to carry their outfit--in which was included a whipsaw to enable them to build a boat of sorts in which to float down the Tanana. They prospected on their way down and found some gold in the Tenderfoot country. They did not have the necessary tools with them to mine this gold as it was so deep in the ground. It was some years afterward that this district was mined.

The Alaska Weekly goes on to say (July 31, 1925) that Atwater had been a successful miner in earlier years, but had fallen on hard times recently. In 1925 he was approaching 80 years of age and, with his 50-year old son, was venturing out on a prospecting trip in hopes of finding a gold creek he believed had not yet been discovered.

No more was learned about Atwater during the course of this project.

Dan O. Banville: A French-Canadian who arrived in the early days, Banville was a former skipper captain on a sailing vessel in the Great Lakes region. The date of his entry into Fortymile may have been around 1902, and he pursued a variety of professions while there.

Banville was well-known as a trapper, and at one time he trapped in a 150-mile area from Chicken to Joseph Village to Pittsburg Creek. By having his traplines spread over a long distance, he did pretty well in the fur business. Banville had small line cabins scattered throughout the North Fork region that he used during the trapping season.

From 1912 to 1916, Banville served as postmaster at Chicken, and ran a small store in conjunction with the post office. At one time he had a cabin on Ingle Creek outside of Chicken.

In 1928, Banville was doing representation work on his mining claim on the South Fork, according to the Alaska Weekly (October 5, 1928). He was still living in the Chicken area in the 1930's, sporting a beard and speaking with a distinct French accent.

At some point in time, Banville married a native woman named Eva, but she remained in the Fortymile district when he left for the outside. His whereabouts after leaving the Fortymile are unknown.

Frank Barrett: Barrett came into the Fortymile district from the McCarthy area, and may have traveled via the Richardson Trail from Valdez in 1903. A big man, he was originally from Colorado, and the date of his arrival in Alaska is not known. It is known, however, that his brother, John Barrett, staked one of the original claims on Chicken Creek before 1900, and turned over the ground to Frank when the copper boom began near McCarthy at the Kennicott Mine. John Barrett also had claims on Miller Creek in 1898, and on Dome Creek in 1905. (Prindle 1903).

Barrett and Joe Brost were partners in mining ventures on Stonehouse Creek and at Long Bar in the 1930's and 1940's. Barrett purchased Brost's claims upon his death, and eventually sold them to Fred Whitehead, a long-time resident of the Fortymile district.

Well-liked in the Chicken area, Barrett never said an unkind word about anyone, and no one ever spoke badly of him. One informant noted that "he was never mad at anyone, except maybe Harry Truman." Barrett remained in the Fortymile district until his death around 1960.

John "Jack" Brooks: Brooks came over the Dawson Trail with a cattle drive from Dawson in 1897 or 1898 and was one of the early arrivals to the Fortymile district. A tall man, he had many small line cabins scattered along the high ridges that he used for fur trapping, and it was said that he could not stand upright in these small shelters.

Brooks was mayor of Fairbanks in the early 1900's (perhaps around 1909) and operated an ice business on the side. When he returned to the Fortymile district, he mined on Napoleon Creek, Little Napoleon Creek, and on the benches along the South Fork. Brooks always believed there was good pay to be found on these benches, although he had little success in his efforts.

In the Franklin community he was referred to as "Dr. Brooks", because of his willingness to offer medical assistance in emergency situations. He once successfully mended Ellen Roberts' broken arm, although he was not thought to have had any special medical training.

Brooks was considered to be a food crank and grew very fine gardens, especially in his later years. He eventually moved to Fairbanks, where he passed away in the mid-1950's at around the age of 90. He was preparing to accompany some friends to the Discovery Days celebration in Dawson when he was found dead in his room.

Joe Brost: Of German descent, and a former shoe salesman from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Brost came to Alaska in the late 1800's, staking a claim on Wade Creek in 1898. In the early 1900's he built a large cabin, a barn, and several root cellars on Long Bar, located downstream from where the North Fork and South Fork enter the Fortymile River. He was noted for planting large gardens and singing German songs.

At one time Brost and Ed Eckstein mined together, whenever the ground would support them both. Later, he mined with Frank Barrett at the upper end of Stonehouse Creek. Brost preferred to live alone, although he had many friends in the area. Every autumn he invited Bill Meldrum and others to pick currants and berries which thrived near his home.

He once made a parka and covered it with the striped covering off a mattress, which was both distinctive and unique. In the early 1930's, an old man named Gillis was employed by Brost at Long Bar. Paul Bytell, a friend of Brost for a number of years, was traveling in the South Fork area one winter and found Gillis after he had committed suicide. Paul was concerned primarily because the victim was wearing Brost's distinctive parka and had used his rifle to end his own life. It is believed that Gillis had either lost his way during a storm or was despondent, and elected to take his own life.

In the fall of 1938, Dick Roberts found Brost in very poor health at Long Bar. Bill Meldrum and the Roberts brothers transported him to Franklin, where an airplane took him to a hospital. Brost returned to Fortymile a short time later, but never fully regained his health, and passed away the following year. He was in his 70's at the time of his death.

Johnny McWilliam Burke: A remittance man from England, Burke came from a well-to-do family and said that he was descended from ancient Irish kings. He came to the Fortymile from Dawson and lived on Flat Creek and in Eagle most of his life. The date of his entry into the Fortymile district is not known. It is thought, however, that his father may have assisted in starting the first hospital in Dawson, and that considering himself to be a noble Englishman because of his heritage, Burke avoided working as much as possible, living primarily on the money he received from England each month. He was noted for the hammocks he had in his yard, suggestive of his preference for resting over working.

Burke was reportedly fond of alcoholic beverages, and one man said he could hold more alcohol than any other man around. At one party he attended, Burke sipped on 151 proof Hudson Bay Rum most of the evening, preferring that to mixed drinks. During Prohibition, he observed Customs agents destroying liquor that had been brought to Eagle from Canada. "It's a bloody crime", he said, shaking his head as the agents destroyed the cargo.

Burke possessed a fine collection of ivory carvings that his father had collected while living in India. He died of tuberculosis sometime in the early 1960's, it is believed, but more specific details are not available.

Ed Janeau: A long-time resident of the Fortymile district, Janeau arrived sometime between 1910 and 1920, perhaps from Colorado, and was one of the few miners to be accompanied by his wife. Janeau mined in the Steele, Canyon, and Smith Creek regions during his many years in Fortymile, spending much of his time on Bonanza Bar in later years. He was noted especially for his ability to select profitable sniping ground when the water levels were low.

Although he owned several cabins, including ones at Eldon Airstrip on the Fortymile River, and at Steele Creek, he considered Canyon Creek to be his home country. Preceded in death by his wife, Janeau passed away in Fairbanks in 1975, taking with him a wealth of information about the history of the Fortymile district.

George Lysell: Another well-known resident of the Fortymile district, Lysell arrived around 1900. It was rumored that he was a sailor on a Norwegian ship and jumped ship at Nome when Felix Pedro discovered gold near Fairbanks.

Lysell carried the mail from Eagle to Chicken for John Powers for ten to fifteen years. Around 1920, he quit his job and moved to Chicken, apparently disgusted over the poor care Powers gave his horses.

Lysell and Frank Purdy began a partnership in 1920 or 1921, mining ground on Myers Fork for many years that had been purchased from a Mr. Davis. Using mining equipment Purdy had acquired from the bankrupt Denison Mining Company, they were able to work the ground more efficiently and thoroughly than their neighbors. Eventually they acquired many of the surrounding claims, and their ground was considered to be among the best in the region. One of Lysell's friends remembered observing at least six quart jars filled with gold nuggets in his possession at one time, which he had apparently saved over the years.

When caterpillars were first introduced to the Fortymile district, Lysell and Art Purdy purchased one, using it to freight supplies into Chicken from Fortymile before roads were built in the area. The "cat" was also useful in their mining operation, as it expedited the process of moving sluice boxes and other heavy equipment.

Lysell was stricken with stomach cancer sometime in the 1950's. He moved away, going to live with a sister in the eastern United States, and died around 1955.

George Matlock: One of the most interesting men in Fortymile history, Matlock was born in Iowa around 1861, came across the Great Plains in the 1870's, and eventually arrived in Alaska in the early 1880's. It was rumored that he had hastily departed the Wyoming region after shooting a man there, but this has not been documented.

A short, stocky man who had a number of different partners over the years, Matlock tended to follow the gold strikes throughout Alaska and the Yukon, although he always returned to the Fortymile district. For a number of years he mined on Fourth of July Creek near Nation, and in 1923 was superintendent of operations for the Fourth of July Mining Company (Alaska Weekly, December 14, 1923).

Matlock was in Juneau in 1886 when Howard Franklin discovered gold at Franklin, and arrived there the following year. In 1889 he entered into a partnership with three other miners at Troublesome Point, located a short distance downstream from Franklin on the South Fork (Buteau 1967:105). Matlock spent the winter of 1893-94 in the small community of Forty Mile (Buteau 1967:113), as many miners in the area commonly did.

It is said that Matlock either married or lived with several native women during his many years in Alaska. He eventually married a white woman from Eagle, Jessica Mathers, sometime in the 1900's.

Matlock once discovered what he considered to be a potentially rich paystreak in the Fortymile, but his efforts to relocate the site after the original discovery always failed. Several long-time residents of this area accompanied Matlock at different times when he attempted to relocate the area of his discovery. Whether the terrain had changed or he was searching in the wrong area has not been determined, but he spent many years looking for the rich ground.

In addition to mining, Matlock also freighted out of Dawson when the Klondike was struck, and assisted Jack McQuesten in constructing trading posts in Circle City and Nation. However, he preferred to prospect for gold, although he never struck it rich. He once noted that the only time he had done well was at Franklin before 1900.

Matlock was still seeking the evasive paystreak in the Fortymile district when he died in 1933. He was laid to rest in Eagle, Alaska.

Dick Mitchell: Originally a rancher in what is now Montana, Mitchell arrived in the Fortymile district in the early 1900's, and operated a small ranch on Mosquito Flats. For many years he provided John Powers with hay for his horses in Chicken. Although his hay was less nutritional than that brought in from the outside, it was substantially less expensive (only $50/ton, compared to $140/ton).

The Alaska Weekly had this to say about Mitchell in its July 17, 1925 issue:

> White collars and barbers are in demand in anticipation of the arrival of the new schoolteacher, who will soon arrive [to Chicken]. There is already rivalry as to who will cut and pack the wood. Dick Mitchell, the mail carrier between Chicken and Tanana Crossing, declares himself in on the race. They want to watch out, for Dick is a fast worker. He built a new bridge for the Alaska Road Commission last winter, across Mosquito Fork, and is proud of his accomplishment. Dick is only just past sixty, but he's a go-getter and a real old sourdough.

When advancing age prevented Mitchell from continuing his ranching business, he abandoned it and moved to Chicken around 1930. He often assisted Bill Williams, a miner on Ingle Creek, during the summer months, but was somewhat inactive during the winter. It is believed that he eventually moved to Fairbanks and passed away while living there.

Ben Norvell: A landmark around Chicken, Norvell arrived around 1898, and considered the Middle Fork to be his favorite country. He never found the wealth he had sought here, but preferred to prospect rather than work for wages. However, he would assist Dick Mitchell during the summer months when he was harvesting hay at Mosquito Flats. Mitchell reportedly told one informant that he had to hide the butter when Norvell came around, as he would eat the entire contents of a two-pound can if no one interfered.

When Norvell killed a moose or caribou, he moved to it and set up a tent, rather than carrying it back to his cabin. One informant noted that Norvell had a section of stovepipe missing from the stove in his cabin. Instead of blocking up the stove or fashioning a section from a tin can, he permitted the smoke to escape into the cabin.

Norvell may have prospected and mined on My Creek, a tributary of Polly Creek. Another tributary is called Norvell Creek, and presumably was named after Norvell. In addition to mining, Norvell also did some trapping and freighted goods from the mouth of the Fortymile River to Chicken in a poling boat.

He wore old pants which he held up with rope and carried an old pack. He claimed to have killed thirteen men in Texas before heading north, and had that amount of notches on "Old Betsy". The rumor circulated that Norvell had never taken a bath, so he was quite noticeable when around others. Around 1940 he became ill, was taken to a Fairbanks hospital, where they gave him a bath, and he died the same night.

John Ostergard: Ostergard was a sailor from Denmark who sailed around the horn in the early days, and arrived in the Fortymile district around 1915. He mined on Wade and Hutchinson Creeks before permanently locating on Napoleon Creek. He preferred to mine alone, although he had Johnny Rambaud and Vern Weaver as partners in his later years.

At age 86, it is said that the only car Ostergard had ever seen was an old Chevrolet with 2 X 4 runners to use on the ice during the winter months, which had been built by Art and Fred Purdy. He was never very accurate in figuring details but never intentionally made mistakes.

In his last years Ostergard made his first plane trip, remarking that it "beat walking". When asked about his health, he said that he had an incurable disease known as "old age". In the 1950's Ostergard fell ill and was rushed to the Fairbanks hospital, where he died a short time later.

John Powers: For nearly thirty years, Powers had the mail contract to deliver mail from Eagle to Chicken. He also carried freight and operated a small trading post in Chicken.

From about 1910 to 1938, Powers and his employees delivered mail to Steele Creek, Lassen, Jack Wade, Franklin, and Chicken. Deliveries were made every ten days, and no one ever recalled the mail being more than one day late--a feat the aircraft mail carriers were unable to match when they assumed mail delivery in 1938.

Quite active in politics, Powers attended many Democratic conventions, including one in Houston, Texas, in 1928 (Alaska Weekly, August 31, 1928). He once returned from a convention with several donkeys or mules, symbolic of the Democratic Party. He had hoped to use them in his freighting business, but they proved to be impractical as pack animals in the Fortymile district. He finally sold them to local miners.

In the early 1930's, Powers was the U.S. Commissioner in Eagle, and in the late 1930's he was elected a territorial senator. He had mining interests in Dome Creek that he sold to Dave Weston in the late 1940's, and his whereabouts after that time are not known.

E.A. "Nimrod" Robertson: A colorful character who lived in Eagle and the Seventymile River region for many years, Robertson was said to have the ability to make everything but a living. He acquired his nickname while shooting his rifle one day. An observer stated, "By gosh, you're a regular nimrod (meaning a good shooter)". The name stuck.

The June 5, 1925 edition of the Alaska Weekly noted that Robertson was operating on Arctic Creek, the uppermost tributary of the Seventymile River, where he was working on a "flying machine" and had applied for patents on several of its parts. The paper also noted that "Nimrod has the reputation of being able to make or repair anything."

Nimrod was supposedly very strong on religion, and attributed his success at finding moose in areas where moose did not normally roam to his religious convictions.

He maintained a personal diary which he kept with him until his death (date is uncertain). The last entry read "bad day to leave for Eagle, will wait until tomorrow." At the time he was at his cabin on the Seventymile and planning to leave for Eagle for the winter. He was over seventy years of age and this

trip was rather difficult for a man of that age, and he waited too late in the year to attempt it. When his body was found near the mouth of the Seventymile River, the soles of his rubber shoes were charred, apparently as a result of Robertson's attempt at warming his feet over an open fire. This was a poor choice of footwear, as the feet perspire easily in rubber-soled shoes. In addition, his food supply was limited to a few raisins he had carried in a coat pocket.

Bill Smith: One of the most colorful characters in the Fortymile, Smith arrived around 1924 with Jim Bytell. Both had been working for the Hammond Dredging Company in Nome and decided to move on to new country.

Their trip to Fortymile followed this general route: They hiked up the Goodpaster River, around the head of Middle Fork, down to Tanacross, over Kechumstuk Mountain lookout point (which overlooks Mosquito Flats), and then followed the telegraph line to the Fortymile district.

Smith and Bytell then constructed several cabins on the Dennison and West Forks, and remained partners until 1928, when Bytell was forced to go outside after becoming snowblind. Smith then trapped alone in the area for several more years.

He was quite a storyteller, as is evidenced in this story he once related to Bill Meldrum:

> He was quite a storyteller, old Bill was. He lived on Lost Chicken in the real early days--he was cookin' up there when they were drift mining there long ago...
>
> At the mouth of the Dennison, he had a camp down there, you know. There was somebody stealin' grub outta the house. And there was nobody around, you see. Every day he'd spot another can er two missin', you know. So anyway, by golly, he said, "My gosh, I got to wait and see who's takin' all that stuff." So he made out he was goin' away as usual, with his gun, pack on his back, headin' out, you know. But he hid a little ways away from the house.
>
> Anyway, a little short time later, along comes a bear, old bear with a cub, you know. And there was only a little window

> in the house, you see, only one window. But anyway, he said the bear opened the window, he took the window out, and lifted the little bear up and set him into the house. Then the little bear handed him out the canned goods.

Smith used to frequent the Cowden Dredge when it operated on Mosquito Fork and tell stories to the workers. However, his regular visits began interrupting their work, and he was banned from the dredge.

In the early 1930's, Paul Bytell saw Smith on the trail to Jack Wade. He was bent over and was using two canes to guide himself down the trail.

Sometime after that, Smith moved to Seattle, where it is thought he owned a small chain of restaurants. He passed away while living with a son in Seattle.

B. More People

Ed Cowen spent many years in Franklin where he related many stories about his days as a stagecoach driver and cowhand in the Montana region.

Joe Danker, an ex-jockey from Chicago, came to the Fortymile in the early 1900's, and drift-mined until old age forced him into retirement.

Ed Eckstein lived and mined at Butte Creek for many years, and was noted for his home-made whiskey. His cabin still stands and is somewhat elaborate in style when compared to many other structures in the Fortymile district. He sometimes was found knee-deep in water at Butte Creek carefully lifting large rocks with a space, and cleaning off the dirt underneath. He claimed to have retrieved an ounce of gold each day in this way.

Fritz Gruber, a German, and George St. Florino, an Italian, both mined on Ingle Creek in the early 1900's. When occasional dances were held at the Chicken roadhouse, Gruber and St. Florino often provided the entertainment, playing the accordion and violin, respectively.

St. Florino, who once stated that his full named was George Charlie Albert Brown St. Florino, also maintained a collection of recordings of prominent Italian singers, including Caruso. He proudly noted that he had come directly to Alaska from Italy, and was not merely of Italian descent.

Gruber is remembered for his unusual habit of buying four or five sets of dishes at a time, and not washing any until all had been used. Then he would take off a day or two from his mining to replenish his stock of clean tableware.

Jimmy Wicks was an old sailing man from England who told many accounts of his life on the ocean. A short and powerful man, Wicks resided at Wicks Bar, located below Napoleon Creek on the South Fork. At one time he had employed his talents as a steam engineer on the dredges near Dawson. Later, he attempted to use steam and a steam scraper for mining at Wicks Bar, but had little success.

Billy Kirkpatrick mined on Montana, Hutchinson, and Wade Creeks for many years, and was well-known in the Fortymile district, although his name was frequently mispronounced as Kilpatrick or Fitzpatrick.

Chris Nelson, a trapper in the North Fork area, was known by two nicknames. Some called him "an-an-an-an" because he spent so much time by himself that he had a difficult time talking when he was around other people. Others referred to him as "phonograph" Nelson, because it was difficult to stop him from talking once he started. One informant noted that it could take several days for Nelson to get talked out.

John and Ellen Roberts both came from Wales and settled in the Fortymile district in the early 1900's. They were married in Dawson and operated the roadhouse in Franklin for many years.

Amund Hagan, a Norwegian who mined on Lilliwig, a branch of Ingle Creek, was a friend of the Johansen family in their home country. He passed away in 1975, taking a wealth of historical information with him to his final resting place.

Doc Hamilton was an old buffalo hunter who spent his later years looking after John Powers' property at Liberty. At one time he had mined on Wade Creek.

Ole Tweeden arrived around 1900 and mined on Chicken Creek and Myers Fork until the 1930's. As early as 1905 he had claims on Gold Creek, located about 20 miles up Mosquito Fork from Chicken (Prindle 1903).

Frank Britton, a well-known prizefighter who spent some time in the Dawson district, moved to Chicken before 1920 and mined on Myers Fork. It was said that he was well-to-do financially and always wore fine clothing. He was known to sluice out an ounce or so of gold before going into the Chicken saloon for an evening of merriment, and return home after spending it all.

Bob Murray mined on American Creek and Discovery Fork from 1898 to 1920, then began a large gardening venture in Eagle. His produce was distributed to local residents and to communities at the various points along the Yukon River.

Bob Steel arrived in the Yukon in the late 1890's. He served as postmaster in Eagle for a number of years and was a U.S. marshall for around eight years. The father of eight children, he maintained a variety of jobs in order to support his family. In the 1940's he operated a hotel in Fairbanks. One of his daughters, Mrs. Roberta Stout, resides in the Fortymile area with her husband, Al.

Enos "Poker" Jones, a Welshman, came from Dawson in the early 1900's. He was noted for taking all his earnings for a year and losing them all in a poker game. He and "Spud" Murphy were employed by the Denison Mining Company until it went bankrupt in 1920. Jones later worked in a coal mine near Chicken, which operated in the 1930's.

Eli Varreau mined near Canyon Creek in the 1920's and possibly before. A big, raw-boned French-Canadian, he came to the Fortymile district after the Klondike rush subsided, and left the area in the early 1930's.

Johnny Simon may have been related to John Powers, the well-known mail carrier from Eagle. Simon worked for Powers after George Lysell had resigned in the early 1920's, and carried the mail to Chicken. Simon's father was stationed at Ft. Egbert in the early 1900's, and that is where young Simon spent most of his childhood.

"Stoneage Bill" was an elderly man when he arrived in the Fortymile district in the 1930's. His name was attributed to his preference to live alone out in the bush. One traveler met Bill on the road one day and observed him baking an apple pie over an open fire. Bill always enjoyed traveling around and exploring new country, and had spent some time in Mexico before moving north.

Isaac Harvey Vanhook was postmaster in Chicken from 1919 to 1922, and once ran a roadhouse there. He eventually sold his interests in the Fortymile district and bought a hotel in Fairbanks, which is now one of the historic buildings on display in Alaskaland.

Frank Watson was a former buffalo hunter who made his home near O'Brien Creek for a number of years. One informant recalled being invited to join Watson for a bowl of moose soup. There was so much moose hair in the soup that the informant found it almost inedible.

C. Descriptions of Fortymile Communities

Several small communities grew up around the scenes of gold mining and other activity in the Fortymile district. Most consisted of only a few buildings, housing a post office, roadhouse, and horsebarns, but served as central meeting points for those living in the surrounding area, as well as for freighters delivering food and other supplies to the prospectors, miners, and other residents. Others were merely overnight stops on the trail for freighters and other travelers. Liberty, for example, was just a horsebarn and shelter cabin located 27 miles south of Eagle. Owned by John Powers, it was the first night stop for the mail carrier or freighters on their way to Chicken, and was used by other travelers along the way.

Brief descriptions of Chicken, Eagle, Franklin, Jack Wade, and Steele Creek are included here to illustrate the role these small communities played in the development of the Fortymile district. Some descriptions include brief summaries of the prominent and long-time residents of each community, when this information was readily available.

Chicken: The following description of the Chicken community is derived from a Statement of Significance on a National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, which is in the BLM Cultural Resource files at Fortymile Resource Area headquarters:

The Community of Chicken is located in the southern portion of the Fortymile River Basin in the eastern Interior of Alaska. The Fortymile River has a rich history of gold mining activity beginning with the 1887 discovery of gold on Franklin Gulch, about 20 miles downstream from Chicken. A rich find led to a minor "goldrush" and in 1896, Bob Mathieson found a major prospect on upper Chicken Creek, staked his claims, and built a cabin.

As more miners invaded the creek, a small community developed. Unlike the typical mining camp which grew rapidly and was often abandoned overnight, Chicken survived the mad rush for gold and stabilized as a hub of activity for the southern portion of the Fortymile Mining District.

Following the famous 1898 stampede to the Klondike gold fields of the adjacent Yukon Territory, Chicken continued to grow. In 1903, a U.S. Post Office was established. Service has continued without interruption since that date. Mail was delivered from Eagle, some 55 air miles distant, every ten days. Using horses, John Powers maintained this

this mail and freight service until 1938 when he was appointed as a Territorial Representative. Mail service was continued during the winter of 1938-39 utilizing dog sleds. The spring of 1939 saw the first mail delivery by airplace, the system still used today.

With the population around 400 in Chicken and adjacent creeks in 1906, Harvey Van Hook built a two-story roadhouse, a building which still stands. Since 1906, this building has been utilized to meet the demands of the community. It has seen service as a roadhouse, saloon, store, school, and finally as a messhall and bunkhouse for a large gold mining company.

School was held in Chicken in the 1920's and again in the late 1940's. In 1949 the Taylor Highway was completed to Chicken, connecting it with the Alcan Highway, the militarily strategic highway constructed in 1943. This narrow gravel road provided the first modern ground transportation link for Chicken which previously had depended on dogsled, horse, river, or foot travel.

In 1953, Fairbanks Exploration Company (F.E. Co.) bought most of the claims around Chicken, as well as, the ground the community is built on. Ground preparation work was begun in anticipation of a large mining operation. Surface stripping and ground thawing was completed in 1957. In 1959 the "Pedro" dredge; a large mechanical gold dredge; was moved from Fairbanks to Chicken, where it operated until 1967. Buildings remaining at Chicken were used to support this gold dredging operation and today, the actual town location houses only the caretaker of the dredge and property. Between 25 and 30 people live in the area now.

With a resident population for nearly 80 years, an active Post Office for 72 years, and a history of established schools, Chicken is one of the few surviving "goldrush" towns of Alaska. It has been the site of active mining since gold was first discovered there in 1896. It has seen nearly all types of operation from small, one-man diggings to the large mechanical dredge.

While the mining of gold is no longer the "insane" operation involving hundreds of people to work a single good creek, the Chicken area still contains a few productive mines. Chicken remains the center of transportation and communication lines for these people.

Showing representative building designs and methods used during the early "goldrushes" to Alaska and Canada, some 25 buildings still remain on the community site. Among these are the Van Hook roadhouse built in 1906, the Powers horsebarn built around 1908, and the small Powers store, also built about 1908. The mechanical dredge that still sets in the creek bottom and surrounding tailing piles presents a mammoth reminder of the efforts expended by man to recover gold.

The community site, outlying buildings, dredge and dredge tailings, along with numerous smaller artifacts combine to tell the 80 year story of Chicken. While Chicken is no longer the hub of activity that it was during the turn-of-the-century, a transportation and communication center serving more than 400 miners in the area, it retains the flavor and feeling of that early period of time that was vitally important in building Alaska as it is today.

It is believed that mining activity in the Chicken Creek region began as early as 1891, when Frank Krell was mining on Meyers Fork (Prindle 1903). However, it is not known when he discovered gold there, so the 1896 date for the "gold rush" to Chicken Creek remains a more accurate figure.

The story is told that when a community developed around Chicken Creek, the miners collectively decided on a name for their settlement. "Ptarmigan" was selected, since this species of bird prevailed in the area, but since no one was certain of the correct spelling of "Ptarmigan", the name "Chicken" was substituted.

Located just east of Chicken Creek is Lost Chicken Hill, so named because it held a paystreak that remained undiscovered for many years, or was "lost". There is a difference of some 300 feet in altitude from the point at which the Chicken Creek paystreak enters Lost Chicken Hill and where it exits on the other side. For many years prospectors assumed that the paystreak would exit at about the same altitude as it entered, or that it had played out. Today, one sizeable mining operation continues to operate on Lost Chicken Hill.

A low-grade coal was mined for a short time near Chicken when the dredges operated in that general area. It turned out to be a poor fuel, as it clinkered up in the steam boilers and created problems. This coal was used in the Cowden and Walker Fork dredges from 1936 to 1938, and was delivered to them over the ice during the winter months. In 1938, these dredges ceased operations at those locations because of the small return for the high costs incurred.

A telephone system was installed in Chicken and at Lost Chicken Hill in the late 1930's by Paul Glascow, an electrician who was mining in the area. Ten phones were installed at a cost of $10 each. The phones were surplus from the N.C. Company, operators of the telephone system in Fairbanks. The Chicken telephone system operated until 1955, and some residents still have the old phones in their homes (BLM Cultural Resource files).

School was in session from 1925 to 1928, and again in 1950 and 1951 in Chicken, when enough children resided in the community to warrant the hiring of a teacher by the territorial government. Anne Purdy, a long-time resident of Chicken, taught there during the 1927-28 school year, and in Franklin the following two school terms. She continues to reside in Chicken during the summer months and devotes some time to writing. She recently completed her second book which was actually authored by Robert Specht, and is entitled Tisha. This interesting novel focuses on Anne's first year of teaching in Chicken, and has become quite popular on both the national and international levels, although local residents have responded less enthusiastically to it.

Currently, the highlight of the week in Chicken is mailday, which occurs every Friday. Most local residents, as well as those from surrounding areas, meet at the post office and await arrival of the mail plane. This occasion provides the people with the opportunity to visit and discuss their day-to-day activities. Since no businesses operate in the Chicken community, the post office can be considered the focal point of the community.

The rich history of the Chicken community warrants preservation. Because of its easy accessibility, the community could be restored and used to inform the increasing number of tourists about the mining history of the region. At least half a dozen current residents of Chicken have resided in the Fortymile district for many years and have responded enthusiastically to inquiries about Fortymile history. It is hoped that their enthusiasm will generate a similar response among others interested in preserving the history of this region.

Eagle

The history of Eagle is rich, varied, and well-documented in other sources, and will only be briefly outlined here. Located on the Yukon River near the northern boundary of the Fortymile Resource Area, Eagle is important to the history of this region for the following reasons: (1) Its population has consisted of Athabascan Indians, Euroamerican settlers, and military personnel, all maintaining separate but interrelated communities. (2) It has served

as a primary link between the Fortymile district and points above and below on the Yukon River; (3) It was the second incorporated city in Alaska; and (4) It was from Eagle that the Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, telegraphed news of his successful crossing of the Northwest Passage to the outside world.

A great deal of the history of Eagle is being preserved through the concerted efforts of interested citizens in that community. The Eagle Historical Society was formed to provide an organized basis for dealing with restoration of buildings, housing of perishable historic artifacts, and recording of oral history. The members contribute their time in the summer as tour guides, directing visitors to the items of historic significance in the Eagle community.

For a more comprehensive introduction to Eagle and its history, several previously-written works offer varying perspectives on this subject. The works by Melody Webb Grauman (ND), David Wharton (1972), and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (1975) are cited in the bibliography and are highly recommended as being both informative and interesting reading. Other communities in the state might do well to follow the example being set by the community of Eagle, and preserve what remain of their own unique histories.

Franklin

The community of Franklin, located near the site of the first gold discovery in interior Alaska, was inhabited continuously from 1886 to 1948. Named after Howard Franklin, who discovered gold in the area in 1886, the community boasted a post office from 1902 to 1945, a school in the late 1920's, a roadhouse, horsebarn, several cabins and an airstrip. A blacksmith shop located across the river supported a drift mining operation, and a cable car aided men and supplies in crossing the river. Dredges operated in the area in the early 1900's, while placer, hydraulic, drift, and sluice operations were also used to extract gold from the ground (BLM Cultural Resource files).

The mouth of Franklin was once referred to as Dogtown, because of the many dogs there that were used to pull sleds during the winter months. At its peak, sometime in the late 1800's, the population of Franklin approached two hundred persons.

Since Franklin Gulch was short, narrow and shallow, a miners' meeting was held to decide whether or not standard size claims should be permitted. It was determined that claims should be shortened, thus permitting more of the early arrivals to mine there.

Frank W. "Tommy" Tomlinson, was the first postmaster in Franklin, serving from 1905 to 1913. Often referred to as "The Waltham Kid", Tommy arrived in the area in the early days and mined Franklin Creek. He was a watchmaker by trade, having worked in the Waltham Watch Factory in Boston as a young man. While in Franklin he was constantly tinkering with watches, clocks, and radios, and was usually able to repair them. Tommy was quite a storyteller and remained in Franklin until the post office and roadhouse closed down in 1945. In his later years he was employed by Fred Whitehead on Lost Chicken Hill, where he would work until he had earned $200 - enough to purchase food for the year. From Franklin he eventually moved to Chicken, residing in a cabin owned by Dick Mitchell.

John and Ellen Roberts operated the roadhouse and post office in Franklin for many years, with John being the postmaster from 1913 until his death in 1933, and Ellen taking over until the post office and roadhouse closed in 1945. The Roberts arrived in Eagle in 1897 and John mined on American Creek before staking claims in Franklin shortly after the turn of the century. Eventually he opened a trading post which was converted into the Franklin Roadhouse. For many years the roadhouse was the focal point of social life in the area, with Sunday dinners, dances and mail day (three times a month) attracting nearby residents to Franklin. The Roberts also boarded horses and dogs for visitors.

Money was not commonly used to pay for goods and services in early day Franklin. Meals at the roadhouse cost $1.00, and were paid for with gold dust which was carefully weighed out on gold scales.

An airstrip was constructed near Franklin when airplanes began carrying the mail and freight into the region. Bob McCombe, a well-known freighter in the Fortymile area was contracted to lengthen and improve the airstrip in 1941. It is no longer maintained and cannot be used (BLM Cultural files).

A popular and long-time resident in Franklin was fondly known as "Uncle" George Mock. An article in the Alaska Weekly (December 14, 1923) had this to say about "Uncle" George:

> "Another old timer...is George Mock, who went to the Yukon even earlier than 1886. Although 80 years of age, he is hale and hearty, and cleaned up over $900 on Franklin Creek the past summer, working all alone... Mr. Mock has never been away from Forty-Mile since he went there 37 years ago. He has never seen Dawson.

Pretty well hunched over in his later years, Mock wanted to live long enough to be bent over so that his head touched his toes.

He had a habit of leaving his cabin door ajar when going to town. Invariably, a bear would enter and cause the door to close behind it. Someone would usually end up shooting the bear through the window, then dragging it out after the cabin had been ramsacked.

Mock drove a stagecoach in the Montana-Dakota Territory region before coming to Alaska, and told many hair-raising stories about his adventure in that job. He also may have been associated with "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Two of his nephews came into the area later on, but no information about them was available. He was alive in 1939, walked to the post office every mail day, and enjoyed visiting with other residents of the community. After his death, he was laid to rest in the Franklin Cemetery.

L.M. "Tip" Spaulding was another long-time resident of Franklin, arriving and staking claims around 1900. He was a well-educated man from the Adironack Mountain region of New York. Reputed to be an avid fisherman and good sportsman, he remained in Franklin until his death, and was buried on his claim at the head of Franklin Creek. His cabin, the "Spaulding Cabin" still stands, although non-use has led to its deterioration.

The last permanent resident of Franklin was Louis Madigan, who arrived in the early days and mined on Storehouse Creek as early as 1900. When mail service was discontinued in 1945, Fred Purdy, the postmaster at Chicken, delivered mail to Louis. In spite of efforts to encourage him to move to Chicken, Louis refused to leave. He suffered a stroke in the late 1940's and was found by Fred Purdy, who attempted to transport Louis to Chicken, but he died enroute.

The Franklin cemetery is located on Troublesome Point, about a quarter of a mile below the mouth of Franklin Gulch on a bench. Troublesome Point was the scene of some of the earliest gold mining activity in the Franklin district, its name a result of the trouble its wealth caused the original partners on the claim.

In 1889 Troublesome Point was purchased by George Matlock and three partners. One informant described mining on that claim:

> "When they first hit it they rocked, two men to a rocker - one guy pourin' in water, uh, dippin' in water and shakin' the rocker, the other guy

shovelin' in, see, pickin' and shovelin' in. They made $75 a day to the man that summer. The next winter they went up to Two Mile Creek, above Franklin Gulch there somewhere. They built a cabin, they cut logs on a side hill. They built this cabin big enough that they could roll logs into the side of the cabin. They dug a hole down in the floor so a fella could stand down low and whipsaw - one guy up above. They whipsawed 20,000 feet of lumber. Now if you don't think that is somethin'. With a whipsaw.

They took it down ta Franklin and built a flume, 50 feet short of a mile, to bring water out of Franklin Creek down around the bluffs. - If you ever get down there you can see it. When I first came in ya could still see the old stagin' where some of that flume had bent around the bluffs. And then they made $10,000 down ther on - that Troublesome Point, it's a small amount of ground."

Buteau presents a slightly different version of this story (1967: 106-107), but it does indicate the work early day miners were willing to do in order to work their claims.

The Roberts family presently owns property in Franklin and has mined on their claims in recent years. The four Roberts children - Alice, Robert, Richard and Ellis - still live in the region, and can contribute much to the history of this important community. It is hoped that efforts are made to restore the remaining structures in Franklin, maintain the cemetery, and generally preserve the history of interior Alaska's first prominent mining community.

Jack Wade

As near as can be ascertained, Jack Wade was named after the discoverer of gold on Wade Creek in 1895. In only a very general sense can Jack Wade be considered a community, as it consisted primarily of cabins scattered up and down the length of Wade Creek. The center of the community would be considered the post office and the U.S. Commissioner's residence, which was located at the mouth of Jefferson Creek. This creek was referred to as Cole Creek by many of the local residents when Charles Cole served as U.S. Commissioner (BLM Cultural Resource files). Wade Creek has been considered by many as the richest creek in the Fortymile district over the years.

In 1900, the prominent geologist, Alfred Brooks, wrote:

> The important discovery of the past year has been Wade Creek...As to the value of the claims, I can give no definite information, but well-authenticated rumors state that fractions of claims had sold at from $30,000 to $40,000...
>
> ...The creek is easily accessible by a good trail from the mouth of Steele Creek, a distance of about 12 miles. Steele Creek can be reached by a trail which comes from Eagle City or by a small boat up Fortymile River from the Yukon. In the latter case prospectors will pass the United States Customhouse at Sam Patch's, and will have to pay duty on their outfits unless they can prove that they were purchased in American territory (1900:376-377).

Charles Cole served as postmaster at Jack Wade from 1910 to 1914, and from 1916 until his death in 1935, in addition to fulfilling his duties as U.S. Commissioner. He claimed to have been an alderman from a New York City Borough before coming to Alaska.

Bertine "Bert" Green assumed duties as U.S. Commissioner and postmaster in the Jack Wade area after Cole's death. Eventually he moved to Lassen (Walker Fork) to carry out his duties. Green was a popular person in the area, but little was learned about him in the course of personal interviews.

Francis "Frank" Pratt was appointed postmaster at Jack Wade in 1938. In earlier years he prospected in the Wade Creek/Walker Fork region, and had constructed a cabin near Walker Fork which is still standing. Around 1947 Pratt found himself one of the last of the miners who had entered in the very early days. Despondent due to the passing on of most of his old friends, he killed all his dogs, then turned the gun on himself.

Charlie Martin, one of the most popular and hardest working miners in the Fortymile district for many years, was in charge of a hydraulic mining operation at Jack Wade for several years. Martin had mined in the Seventymile River region with George Matlock and others before coming to Fortymile. He mined on Montana Creek for a while, then was offered the job of bringing a debt-ridden operation back on its feet. In spite of being faced with a variety of problems, Martin succeeded in making the venture a profitable one. He remained in the area until he was in his 70's, then went outside to live in Kansas in the late 1940's or early 1950's.

Jimmy Morris mined around Jack Wade in the early days, and later was in charge of an Alaska Road Commission work crew building pack trails in the area. Of Irish descent, Morris also mined in the Chicken Creek area in 1925, and left the Fortymile area permanently in 1946. He died in Centralia, Washington, in the late 1940's, aged in his 80's.

Andy Lassen was one of many who worked in the Jack Wade mining camps. The Alaska Weekly (February 21, 1930) reported that Lassen controlled several miles of rich claims at the lower end of Jack Wade Creek. Lassen lived near Walker Fork, which at one time was known as Lassen Airfield, in his honor.

A.A. "Mac" McCandless was a promoter who brought steam scrapers and other equipment into Wade Creek in the early 1920's. Charlie "Deep Hole" Johnson considered Jack Wade to be his main camp, although he had claims on Uhler and Napoleon Creeks, too. His name resulted from his sinking of deep holes in the areas he prospected. Walter Hunt was another old timer at Jack Wade. He was pretty bent over in the 1930's, from his many years of drift mining, but he remained active until leaving for Fairbanks in the early 1940's. Nate Patterson also mined on Upper Jack Wade in the 1930's. When he left the area for the outside, he left his property to Charlie Martin.

Most mining on Wade Creek until the late 1920's consisted of winter drifting and sluicing of the gravel dumps in the spring. Charlie Martin had attempted to use a scraper plant in 1920, but had better success with the hydraulic operation on Upper Jack Wade in 1928. (Naske 1973:34-35).

In 1935 the Mulvane Dredge was moved from the Fortymile River to Jack Wade Creek. North American Mines, Incorporated, ran the dredge until 1940, when ownership was transferred to the Wade Creek Dredging Company. This company also utilized other mining methods on Wade Creek, but was forced to cease operations when World War II broke out in 1942, as the U.S. Government required all available equipment to be used in support of the war effort. Wade Creek Dredging Company never operated the dredge again, but utilized operable parts from the dredge in their other mining properties. The Jack Wade Dredge and much of Wade Creek is now in the hands of George Robinson, a long-time resident and miner of the Jack Wade region.

Minimal activity following World War II did not warrant the maintenance of a post office at Jack Wade, and mail delivery ceased in September, 1948.

George Robinson, who also owns the buildings at the community of Jack Wade, actively mines on his claims, and several other small operations are found in the area. Mr. Robinson should be consulted for detailed historical information about Jack Wade and might not be opposed to historical preservation efforts in Jack Wade and on the Jack Wade Dredge, if these activities do not interfere with his mining operation or encourage others to disturb his personal property. Because of their accessibility on the Taylor Highway, both the community and the dredge can serve as useful interpretive devices for the more recent mining history of the Jack Wade area.

Steele Creek Community

A small, but important community in the Fortymile district, Steele Creek community was located at the confluence of Steele Creek and the Fortymile River. Consisting of two cabins, a barn, a roadhouse and an airstrip, this community served as a major meeting place for miners and trappers in the region, and had an active post office and roadhouse from 1907 to 1951. As it is located on the major overland trail from Eagle to Chicken, John Powers and other freighters made overnight stops there.

An early day roadhouse, the "Arizona House" may have been the original roadhouse on Steele Creek. It was located on the trail at the head of the creek, and this location may have been less favorable than one closer to the Fortymile River (BLM Cultural Resource files).

John A. "Pappy" Kemp and his wife operated the roadhouse for many years, with Kemp also serving as postmaster from 1908 to 1932. The Steele Creek Roadhouse was a two-story structure, housing a restaurant and post office in the lower level, and two sections of sleeping accommodations above - one section each for men and women. A ferry was used at Steele Creek, since the normal mail route followed a trail on the opposite side of the creek.

The Kemps were well-known in Fortymile and liked by all. Mr. Kemp had mined in the area before operating the roadhouse, and he was mining on Wade Creek before 1900. Mrs. Kemp came from the southern United States and was quite a horsewoman. Once a year she would visit surrounding communities aboard her gallant white horse. The Kemps had no children, as far as anyone can recall.

Harry Ross purchased the Steele Creek Roadhouse in 1932 and operated it until 1938. Ross was a miner, having worked claims on American Creek and its main tributary, Discovery Fork. It

is rumored that he was a "tinhorn gambler" and enjoyed playing poker. Ross sold the roadhouse in 1938, went outside, and eventually returned to Eagle. He went hunting one day in his later years and failed to return. It is assumed that he fell into the Yukon River and drowned, but no sign of his body was ever found.

The only available information about Steele Creek after 1938 is a list of postmasters and their length of service:

Orville W. Cowden	May 1938 - April 1939
Ann S. Ayer	April 1939 - February 1940
Eugene Doherty	February 1940 - September 1947
Lawrence Lyman	September 1947 - July 1949
Ruth E. Wilson	July 1949 - August 1951

Mail service was then transferred to Boundary (BLM Cultural Resource files).

Orville Cowden was involved in corporate mining ventures in the Fortymile for many years, and Steele Creek may have served as his headquarters for a short time. No attempt has been made to learn more about the other postmasters.

Ed Janeau, a long-time resident of the Steele Creek area would have been an excellent source for the history of Steele Creek. Unfortunately, he passed away in Fairbanks in 1975, aged in his 90's, before he could be contacted. However, the Steele Creek property is now controlled by Mr. Neil Thurneau, who was acquainted with Janeau. It is possible that he can provide more details about Steele Creek, thus enabling more of the history of this community to be preserved.

D. Fur Trapping

Fur trapping was a major activity in the Fortymile long before the gold rush, as has been previously noted, but the number of trappers might have increased in the 1900's. For some, trapping was a primary source of income, while others found trapping an acceptable sideline to mining for gold or chopping wood. One informant considered trapping a good way to "kill time". In any event, some relief from the monotony of the long winter months could be found in this activity.

Fox, marten, lynx, wolf, and weasels were the primary animals sought by trappers in the Fortymile. Seasonal fluctuations in weather conditions, the number of trappers in the area, and the predator population dictated the availability of these fur-bearing animals. If the rabbit population was high, for example, lynx were likely to be common. In rare instances, silver, black, or cross fox might find their way into a trap, but this was compared to a miner finding a fist-sized nugget.

Legally, all trappers were required to secure a license before trapping in the area, with a year's residency mandatory in order to qualify for one. The license could be renewed annually, following the completion of a brief report in which the trapper described his activities for the previous year and itemized his take. However, since law enforcement was rather difficult to provide in the remote and sparsely-populated Fortymile district, whether or not all trappers were licensed is open to question.

A beginning trapper would select an area that appeared promising and set out a few traps over an area of several miles. Unless experienced, he had no way of determining the productivity of a given area, and might be reluctant to channel too many energies and traps in an unproven region. If he remained in an area for more than one year, the trapper might expand his territory and set out more traps. Some trappers employed as many as 100-150 miles of traplines in a given territory.

A trapper checked his traps as often as possible for several reasons. It was important to remove a catch as soon as possible and prepare the trap for another catch. More important, traps might be sprung by a passing animal or made inoperable for some other reason. Few trappers were worried about another trapper encroaching in his territory or looting his traps; each had his own specific territory, and by verbal agreement would not interfere with any trapping being done by another trapper in another territory. This is merely one example of the code of honor which prevailed among most early-day residents of interior Alaska.

A series of cabins generally were found in ten to twelve mile intervals along the traplines. This was the approximate distance that a trapper could travel in one day as he checked his lines. Main headquarters was established in a base, or home cabin, in which furs and most supplies were stored. Smaller line cabins along the way were sparsely furnished (stove, bed, and a few provisions), and provided overnight stopping points for the owner. Especially during stormy weather, a line cabin was a welcome sight to a cold and weary trapper.

Of those informants contacted in this survey, several had trapped in the early days in the Fortymile district. Among the areas they traversed were the Middle Fork/Joseph Village region, the North Fork, Buckskin Creek, Steele Creek, and Dennison Fork. One informant captured 22 wolves one winter in the Dennison Fork region, which apparently is quite a good catch, as wolves are not easily captured. Another informant recalled two trappers who caught nearly 100 marten in the late 1940's in the Middle Fork/Joseph Village area. During the winter of 1927-28, Art and Fred Purdy reportedly caught 50 lynx, 12 mink, 12 wolves, 60 weasels, and 4 wolverine (Alaska Weekly, May 18, 1928:7).

The local roadhouses purchased furs, as did fur traders and representatives from major centers in the state of Washington. Ft. Yukon was the major center locally, while the Seattle Fur Exchange and West Coast Groceries sent fur buyers into the Fortymile to compete for the season's catch. Prices paid for furs have varied over the years, being somewhat reliant on the law of supply and demand, and have ranged from less than $1 for a weasel pelt to $8 for lynx, $25-$50 for marten, and $20-$25 for wolf (in addition to a bounty paid by the territory before statehood, and the state afterward). One trapper received $1200 for a silver fox pelt in the 1930's, giving some indication of the rarity of this animal. A cross fox (a mixture of a silver and red fox) brought more than $100 in that same time period. Prices are undoubtedly higher for at least some of the fur-bearing animals today, and it is likely that trapping laws have been changed to protect endangered species or to limit the take of certain animals.

Furs from larger animals, such as bear, caribou, and moose, were either used locally or had little value in the early days. Native use of moose and caribou hides continues today, with many being tanned in the traditional way. Interestingly, bear hides had little value, and were not even included in the price lists carried by fur buyers. Consequently, they were either used as rugs or hung on the sides of cabins and/or caches.

Fur trapping continues today in the Fortymile, although conditions have changed and fur animals are less plentiful than in the early days. This requires trappers to either operate on a large scale, or to not be too reliant on trapping as a source of income. Competition for furs has created less trust between trappers, although thefts from one's traplines are considered minor problems. In any event, the increased accessibility to the Fortymile district and increased population has undoubtedly had some effect on the availability of fur-bearing animals.

E. Odds and Ends

Many other topics were explored during conversations with long-time Fortymile residents. However, the topics were too numerous and varied to permit intensive examinations of each. Some of the more interesting and informative topics are presented here because they do contribute to an appreciation of life in the Fortymile district in the early days.

Drift Mining

Drift mining involved digging holes or sinking tunnels into the sides of hills in search of a paystreak. The tunnel frequently was supported by timbers to prevent accidental cave-ins. The desired material was carried out in a wheel barrow or hoisted out in buckets, and run through a sluice box to separate the gold.

Drifting could be done year-around, although ground drifted during the winter could not be sluiced until water was available the following spring. Winter drifting required thawing the gravel with wood fires before it could be moved.

A tedious method, drifting was one of the earliest mining methods used, and was quite limited in many respects. Machines soon were introduced to hasten the mining process and to mine the ground more efficiently.

Hand Mining

Not unlike drift mining in the sense that most of the work was done manually, hand mining involved the use of picks and shovels. Frequently a creek would be dammed up, with the dam having a swinging gate in it. When water filled the dam to a certain point, the gate would open, allow water to run downsteam and wash away surface material on the creek bottom. Then big rocks would be moved along the side of the creek until bedrock was reached. At this point, sluice boxes would be set up and paydirt run through them.

The Flood of 1936 (and 1925)

The Fortymile mining district was the scene of a flood in 1936. Everyday for a week it rained very hard, and the South Fork rose three feet above the former high water mark.

According to the Alaska Weekly (July 17, 1925) a similar flood occurred during the spring of 1925. The water level of the Yukon River rose to the highest levels recalled by long-time residents. Three feet of water filled "Pappy" Kemp's roadhouse at Steele Creek. A garden planted by Johnny and Ellen Roberts at Franklin was totally obliterated by the high waters of the South Fork. At Moose Creek, Justice Elden sought refuge on the roof of his cabin until a boat arrived. Eagle escaped heavy damage because of it being situated on high ground.

Cold Temperatures

During the winter of 1947, the temperature dropped to a record -81°F at Snag, Yukon Territory. That same winter, the Chicken community suffered through six weeks of temperatures ranging between -50° and -70°F. At the Chicken Roadhouse, operated by Bob and Molly McCombe, nearly half a cord of wood was required to keep fires burning in their three stoves. Fred Terwilliger was living near Napoleon Creek that winter, and recalled temperatures of -50° to -65°F being commonplace.

Woodcutting

Ft. Egbert in Eagle had a standing contract for 3,000 cords of wood when it was in operation. Men could earn $4 to $5 per cord for cutting wood and delivering it to the fort.

Bears

All informants recalled having one or more encounters with black and grizzly bears, and the stories of these experiences are too numerous to include in this report. Generally, however, bears were not a serious threat to human life unless a person's carelessness resulted in such a situation.

Bears were notorious for breaking into food caches and consuming the contents. They also were noted for eating a recently-killed moose or caribou if the hunter took no special precautions to protect his kill. In late summer, bears fed on the wild berries so numerous in the Fortymile area, thus requiring berry pickers to be on the lookout at all times.

Bears were normally just as happy to avoid humans as humans were to steer clear of them. However, grizzlies were dangerous when in quest of food, when feasting on fallen prey, or when separated from their offspring. Then they might attack, primarily for defensive purposes.

Some informants are concerned about the increasing bear population currently noted in the Fortymile Resource Area. Two informants maintained the belief that bears are in no small way responsible for the decreasing moose and caribou population, and another noted that the bear population is not currently controlled as it was in the early days. In several instances, bears were observed on the Taylor Highway or nearby during the course of this project, although the author never observed them. Residents of the Fortymile region are quick to warn newcomers about being cautious when out in the bush.

Entertainment

Life in the Fortymile interior was not drab and monotonous as some might believe. Early day residents were somewhat more limited in their social activities, but very few came to Alaska expecting bright lights and the glamour of the cities on the outside.

Neighbors frequently got together for card games or just to visit, especially during the winter months. Dances were held at the roadhouses at least once a month, with musicians or early day phonographs providing the music. Dinner parties marked the celebration of a person's birthday or many other holidays. Sunday dinners were not uncommon in the various roadhouses.

Some local residents made periodic trips to the surrounding areas (Dawson, Fairbanks, etc.), while others journied outside for the winter months. In most cases they seemed to be eager to return to the Fortymile region because it was "home".

Gold

Gold was used as the medium of exchange in the Fortymile mining district for many years, since most local residents were either directly or indirectly involved in gold mining. All roadhouses and other businesses had gold scales on which dollar amounts of gold could be measured; it could then be exchanged for cash or exchanged for goods and services.

Those with large quantities of gold normally shipped it to an assay office in Seattle, where it was sold and sent to the U.S. mint. Further details about how this transaction was completed were not available at this writing.

Moose Creek Customs Station and Roadhouse

In the late 1800's and early 1900's a Customs Station and roadhouse operated on Moose Creek, a tributary of the Fortymile River located west of the international boundary. It was busiest in the very early days, slowing down considerably when most traffic into the Fortymile area entered via Eagle. However, it operated until the late 1930's or early 1940's, and was the scene of occasional dances during the winter months. Justice Eldon, after whom the nearby Eldon Airstrip was named was operating the Moose Creek Roadhouse in 1938 (BLM Cultural Resource files).

The Fishwheel Stampede

A man claimed to find gold nuggets on the paddles of a fishwheel on the Yukon River between Circle City and Fort Yukon. Apparently

curious old-timers from all over raced to the scene of this supposed discovery, hoping to obtain some of the riches there.

One miner was suspicious and sent some nuggets in to be assayed. They turned out to be brass filings that had probably dropped off a riverboat traveling on the river. Some gold nuggets had been planted in with the filings to make the claim appear more attractive.

It is not known if any Fortymile miners were lured to this phony discovery, but one informant said that any knowledgeable miner would have been suspicious. Under the fishwheel was at least 40 feet of gravel, and nugget gold would have been close to bedrock - not in the area in which the fishwheel would have picked it up.

Long-Toed Pete

An early day miner in the Fortymile, Long-Toed Pete was of Turkish ancestry and lived in a cabin below Napoleon Creek (which was in ruins in the early 1930's). His nickname was supposedly derived from the fact that one of his big toes was 4 inches long.

Dog Food

For many early day residents, dogs were critical to survival, and required substantial amounts of food. Such items as broken rice, corn meal, caribou, fish, and cooked bear meat served as main features of the diet, either individually or in combination. Some residents purchased bales of dried dog salmon for their dogs.

Hospitality

It was an insult to lock your cabin in the early days - one never knew when a traveler might need food and shelter. Guests were expected to leave the cabin as they had found it. It was especially important to restock the dry kindling wood, for the next traveler might desperately need to build a fire for warmth. If the guest utilized food in the cabin, he was expected to leave a note and/or make arrangements to replace what he used.

Mail Delivery

In the early 1900's, when Fort Egbert was operational, two mail carriers delivered mail into the Fortymile district. One traveled south from Eagle to meet another headed north from Valdez. They met halfway, exchanged their incoming and outgoing mail, and returned to their home base.

A carrier from Valdez was hoping to arrive in Chicken before meeting the Eagle carrier, and stop at one of the local saloons to consume some "antifreeze" to remove the chill of the cold winter air. He was visibly frustrated when he met the Eagle carrier at a point south of Chicken, and had to head back to Valdez.

Shooting Incident in Chicken

Sometime before 1920 a family living in Chicken reportedly had a spoiled son who had his way most of the time. One day he picked a fight in a saloon and came out on the losing end. Angrily returning home, he found a gun, returned to the saloon, and killed the man who was victorious in their fight. The boy was jailed and spent the remainder of his life in prison, despite his parents' constant efforts to have him released.

Butte Creek Dredge

Around 1934 a dredge was transported by horses to an area just below the mouth of Butte Creek, and mined there one or two summers. Then in the winter of 1936 or 1937, the dredge was dismantled and hauled up the South Fork to the mouth of Walker Fork, then up Walker Fork to the mouth of Wade Creek. It was reassembled there, and is now commonly referred to as the Jack Wade Dredge, which is near Mile Post 86 on the Taylor Highway.

A Year's Grubstake

Because of transportation limitations and expensive freighting costs, many residents of the Fortymile purchased a year's supply of food at one time. Consisting primarily of staples - flour, sugar, beans, dried fruit, eggs, bacon, and coffee. The cost of this yearly grabstake ranged from $200 in the 1920's to $300 in the late 1930's. Freighting charges absorbed much of the expense. Although the diet may appear to have been monotonous, it was adequately complemented with game animals and fish which flourished in the Fortymile region.

Miners Meetings

Since law and order was somewhat lacking in the early days, miners devised a system for handling the various problems that confronted them. The miners would decide on the size of claims if special circumstances warranted. For example, when gold was first discovered in the Fortymile by Howard Franklin, the discovery claims were 1500 feet long, as permitted by the mining laws of Alaska. However, since the ground surrounding the discovery claim was limited, miners in the area agreed to stake 300 foot claims, in order to make room for others who might want to locate in that area (Buteau 1967: 101-102).

In other instances miners meetings settled issues concerning water rights and where the claims' recording offices should be located. A miners meeting was instrumental in having a U.S. Commissioner located at Jack Wade for the purpose of recording mining claims - rather than in Eagle, which was much less convenient to miners in the interior.

Finally, miners meetings were called to settle general problems arising in the local community, such as theft of personal property, or any other act considered contrary to the way of life in the area.

Routes into the Fortymile District

A variety of routes were used by miners, freighters, and others who entered the Fortymile district from any outlying location. The route chosen was dependent upon the points of departure and destination, as well as the time of year.

Some of the routes were generally described by several informants, but efforts should be made to more carefully pinpoint the specific trails.

Eagle to Middle Fork: Follow the road from Eagle. When it ends, continue south and follow Champion Creek to its confluence with the North Fork of the Fortymile River. Follow the North Fork south past the North Fork Station and on to the Middle Fork.

Eagle to Chicken: Follow the road from Eagle past Discovery Fork to Gravel Gulch. Continue south over American Summit (Taylor Highway Mile Post 143) to Liberty, and follow O'Brien Creek to its confluence with the Fortymile River. Follow the Fortymile River downstream to Steele Creek, continue over the hill to Gilliland Creek, and down to Jack Wade. From there, head due west to Franklin and follow the trail to Chicken. This route was frequently used during the summer months.

A second Eagle to Chicken route differed slightly from the one previously described. From Liberty, the trail proceeded south to Dome Creek to its confluence with O'Brien Creek, then assumed the route to Franklin.

A third route was used primarily during the winter months. At the mouth of O'Brien Creek, the Fortymile River was followed upstream to the South Fork. The South Fork was followed upstream to Mosquito Fork, and Mosquito Fork followed until it was near Chicken.

Dawson to Chicken: A winter route used to deliver freight to the Chicken district followed basically the same pattern as the winter route from Eagle to Chicken. The major difference was the point of departure.

Tetlin Junction to Chicken (before Taylor Highway): A winter trail beginning near the present location of the Fortymile Roadhouse at the juntion of the Taylor and Alaska Highways. Near Mile Post 9 on the Taylor Highway the east fork of the Dennison River was followed to Chicken.

Bear Fat

Bear fat was often rendered and combined with moose tallow to form a shortening which was ideal for baking pastries.

Food Preservation

A variety of methods were used by Fortymile residents for storing and preserving perishable foods.

Most cabins had a small cellar under the floor that provided general storage space, and kept items at a constant cool temperature.

Root cellars were dug in hillsides to store food items that should not be frozen, such as fresh vegetables.

A meat shaft was commonly found near the cabin of many residents. This was a deep hole dug down into the permafrost, in which meat and other items could be stored and frozen indefinitely. The more elaborate meat shafts had a system similar to that used in old water wells for retrieving water. A person merely had to climb down a ladder to the bottom of the shaft, attach the frozen food item to a rope, climb out of the shaft, and wind up the rope.

"Nature's icebox" provided cold food storage during the winter months.

HOW THEY WERE NAMED

Davis Creek: Named after Jim Davis, who discovered gold there in 1890, Davis Creek was the location of one of the earliest gold strikes in the Fortymile district (Mertie 1903).

Fortyfive Pup: Small creeks are often referred to as "pups". A man named Michael once operated a fox farm on this creek, and one informant suggested that Michael may have raised 45 fox pups one year, thus accounting for the name.

Another informant suggested that 45 claims may have originally been staked on that creek.

A third possibility is that the creek lies at a 45° angle to the creek of which it is a tributary, Buckskin Creek.

Fortymile River: When the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers first surveyed the Yukon River (year unknown), Frederick Schwatka named a river the Cone Hill River, because of the cone-shaped hill located near its confluence with the Yukon River (Synergy West Ltd. 1974).

However, on the old maps, the river was listed as the Shitando River, "but miners are very independent in their nomenclature, and often adopt a new name if the old one does not suit them" (Spurr 1900:109). In the case of the Shitando River, it was renamed the Fortymile River in the early days of the Fortymile district because it entered the Yukon River forty miles downstream from the old Hudson Bay post at Ft. Reliance (Mertie 1938:157).

Ingle Creek: A man named Jake Ingle first staked the creek that now bears his name, sometime in the late 1890's. The Alaska Weekly (May 28, 1925) noted that "Ingle Creek is one of the oldest producing creeks of the district and has turned out a considerable quantity of gold." Many early day miners on Ingle Creek are well-remembered in the Fortymile district.

Miller Creek: This creek was first prospected by Peter Miller in 1893, and it is assumed that it was named after him (Mertie 1903).

Napoleon Creek: This productive creek was supposedly named after a French-Canadian miner who, after having a few drinks, imagined himself to be Napoleon Bonaparte. He would proceed to tell stories about his life as Napoleon, and eventually was referred to by that name. It is also believed that he was one of the earliest miners on Napoleon Creek.

O'Brien Creek: This creek may have been named after Michael "Mickey" O'Brien, who arrived at Franklin in 1886 with Howard Franklin, the discoverer of gold in the Fortymile district (see Buteau 1967:103-105).

Stonehouse Creek: There are rocks at the head of this creek that give the appearance of a house, if one uses his imagination. It is not known who named this creek, but Art Langmack and Charlie Doyle arrived there in the very early days, and Louis Madigan mined there in 1900.

Wade Creek: Jack Wade discovered gold on this creek in 1895. (Mertie 1903).

Wilson Creek: This creek is sometimes referred to as Joe Wilson Creek, and is probably named after the first man to discover gold there. In his recollections, Frank Buteau (1967:103) mentions a Frenchman named Joe Wilson, who was in the Fortymile district in 1887, but it has not been determined whether or not a connection exists between this man and Joe Wilson Creek.

IV

FORTYMILE IN TRANSITION

Long-time residents of the Fortymile district have witnessed many changes over the years, and their reactions to the effects of modernization have been mixed. The Fortymile district is undergoing a process not unlike that in any other region which becomes attractive to outsiders. Especially with the numerous recreation outlets in the area, as well as its natural beauty, rich history, and minimal population, the Fortymile region has much to offer to a variety of people.

The process of change frequently assumes a "snowball" effect and proceeds in a seemingly uncontrollable fashion. However, the opportunity for carefully planned and directed change exists to some extent in the Fortymile district. To be sure, some irreparable damage has been done, but it is hoped that both local citizens and others involved in local development have learned from mistakes made elsewhere.

The Fortymile district encompasses some of the most beautiful land in North America. Its climate ranges from one warm and relatively dry in the summer, to one cold and sometimes harsh during the long winter months. Temperatures in the 80° to 90° range are not uncommon in July and August, nor are readings of -40° and -50° for several days at a time in the winter. Wildlife is abundant, when compared to that in many areas of the lower 48 states, but less common than in years past.

Not all communities have electricity, indoor plumbing, telephones, and other items that many Americans take for granted. Some areas are accessible only by boat or aircraft, while the major road in the region, the Taylor Highway, is closed during the winter months. Fresh fruits and vegetables and other perishable food items are not always readily available in the stores, and shopping facilities are limited at best. It is ironic that some Fortymile residents have fewer modern conveniences than many of the summer tourists traveling through in their self-contained motor homes, not that this concerns many of the long-time residents.

Given these factors, plus the fact that the cost of living in the Fortymile district is substantially higher than that in the lower 48 states, one can correctly assume that a special kind of people have chosen the Fortymile district as their permanent home. Whether they came here to escape an unfavorable lifestyle elsewhere, to seek their fortune mining gold or trapping fur animals, or were raised here and knew no other way of life, the Fortymile pioneers are to be admired. They are the people who never locked their doors, who considered a handshake or verbal agreement as binding, and who managed, rather than exploited the resources available to them. Now their chosen lifestyle is not only being threatened, but also dramatically altered by forces above and beyond their control.

The opportunity for carefully-directed change exists in much of the Fortymile district, and should give consideration to those who have resided here for either most, or all of their lives. All too often, the older people are not given the opportunity to contribute their knowledge and beliefs, because they are considered "old-fashioned" and not attuned to the contemporary situation. Unfortunately, the pioneers fall victim to the numbers game, in which the bureaucracy determines that a few should suffer for the betterment of many.

An important aspect of this project focused on learning more about how long-time residents of the Fortymile district have viewed the changes that have taken place during their lifetimes. Some of their impressions are presented here, in the hope that others can learn from them, and gain an appreciation for the wisdom and vision in their words.

A. Airplanes

The introduction of airplanes in the Fortymile district in the 1930's marked one of the earliest significant changes, and one viewed in both a positive and negative fashion. Construction of airstrips in most communities permitted the mail and many supplies to be delivered by aircraft, presumably in a more efficient fashion. However, air service was costly in the early days, and the service less dependable in some instances than the overland freighters had previously provided. In time, air service became more refined, costs declined, and service improved, and today, air travel is as common in the Fortymile district as are automobile and truck traffic in many of the lower 48 states.

A complaint voiced by several informants concerned the detrimental effects of airplanes on the game animals in the Fortymile district. Airplanes made formerly remote areas more accessible to sportsmen. To quote an informant,

> Now they come up on a plane, want to hunt the next day, always in a hurry. I know a dude who came up in November one time, who wanted a good bull [moose]. They didn't find anything ta suit 'em, so they got somebody ta fly 'em up on one of the creeks where he killed one right out of the plane. Most likely, he probly wrote up a big article about how he stalked 'em.
>
> I know a place where guys with those big balloon tires on their planes could land on the rough benches amongst the sheep, too. Well, that kinda stuff kills them off, too. And two planes would work together sometimes, too. They got away with a lot of things years ago they wouldn't dare do now.

Yet at least one other informant believed that airplanes still are misused for the expressed purpose of locating and shooting certain game animals. A problem noted in some parts of Alaska involves aircraft reconnaissance of game animals. When the desired animal is located, its location is radioed to hunters on the ground who can quickly move into the area with off-the-road vehicles.

The use of airplanes for transporting the ill and injured to outside medical facilities is especially important, considering the limited health care facilities available in interior Alaska, including the Fortymile district. Airplanes have also become an integral feature of fire control, as the overhead observation permits intensive surveillance of the more remote areas within the Fortymile district.

B. Taylor Highway

As the only road connecting Eagle and the interior of the Fortymile district with the outlying areas, the 162-mile stretch of the Taylor Highway is an important communication link. Its impact on the Fortymile district is relatively recent, however, as its construction was not completed until the early 1950's. By this time, a majority of the mining activity in the region had ceased, and the population was remaining somewhat stable, if not decreasing. Although the Taylor Highway is not maintained during the winter months, it does serve an important function during the remainder of the year.

Perhaps the most visible impact of the Taylor Highway is the increase in tourism that has resulted since its completion. Several scenic overlooks and campgrounds mark the route between Tetlin Junction and Eagle, with more roadside facilities being planned in future years to accommodate anticipated increases in tourist traffic.

Construction of the Taylor Highway in the late 1940's and early 1950's had a marked impact on the economy of the Fortymile district. Not only did local residents provide labor, goods, and services, but others were also attracted to the area to provide otherwise unavailable goods and services. Once the area was made more accessible, others saw the possibility of growth and development in the general Fortymile region because of its scenic beauty and abundance of wildlife.

Not all the implications of the Taylor Highway are viewed in a positive fashion, as is evidenced by its effects on the game animals that once flourished in the area. One informant noted,

> Yeah, there was a lot more game in those days than you see now. Since the Taylor Highway's been put through here, it's been killed off pretty fast--a lot faster than the increase.

Another informant was more descriptive in his evaluation of how the Taylor Highway affected the caribou population:

> Now the game, they've really messed 'er up, oh jeez, it's terrible. What did it was the roads, and these caribou come across there--and they're a tame animal when they're in a herd. Big herds come along and they're not any wilder than a bunch a wild cattle on the prairie, not even hardly that wild. Here's guys lined up--and they had a long season on 'em--bangin' into the herd. For every one they got, I betcha there was five got away wounded. Then they wonder where the caribou go.
>
> It use ta be all this stuff [hunting] was done on foot, and you didn't hurt the game any, see. And there was just very few people. If they had to just take right off across anywhere instead of on a road, there wouldn't be near the huntin'. But that's what happens. When you make it easy fer people to git into a place, they'll git in there.

Along these same lines, a third informant made this analysis:

> When they could get in here so easy, the worst of it was they just waste it. People would come in to hunt and just never thought. They'd shoot into a herd of caribou, and when they left, they left the dead and wounded animals behind.

Whatever impressions people have of the Taylor Highway, it is here to stay, and plans call for it to be modified and improved to meet the demands of increased use.

C. Hunting and Game Animals

The effects of aircraft and the Taylor Highway on game animals in the Fortymile district have been briefly described in the preceding sections. Increased accessibility into the area and the influx of trophy hunters have had a tremendous influence on the number of game animals in the region.

Moose have been an important food resource for many years in interior Alaska, but their numbers have always been subject to major fluctuations, based to some extent on the available food supply, as well as the number of predators (bears and wolves) with which they must contend. Because they formed such an important element of the food supply of both natives and miners in the area, they were subject to less abuse and exploitation than is currently the case. A recent publication released by the Alaska Fish and Game Department (Coady 1976) provides a general examination of factors affecting the moose population in interior Alaska in recent years. Informants contacted in this survey did not indicate that moose had been subjected to as many detrimental influences as had other game animals in the Fortymile district.

The status of caribou in the Fortymile district, however, is another matter. At its peak in the early 1920's, the Fortymile caribou herd may have numbered 500,000 or more animals (Gasaway 1975). One informant recalled the time when E.A. "Nimrod" Robertson counted a portion of a herd that passed by his cabin near the Seventymile River. The trail was very narrow, which permitted "Nimrod" to count the animals during the daylight hours, a project that took three days. During the 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. period for three days, he counted approximately 40,000 caribou--and this was only a branch of the major herd. Another informant recalled:

> I haven't seen a really big herd for years, but when we first landed here, they used to be two runs. In the spring there'd be a bunch come in from the east, headin' west. I've watched 'em comin' down the hillside on one side a the river, and then they'd bunch up on the river bank there. Then the bunch would come in from the other side. For a solid hour you'd see 'em comin' down the ridge. There musta been thousands of 'em. They was all cows and calves and some yearlin's. The bulls, they keep separate.

And another informant made these observations:

> They'd be frightened now if they saw the animals we used to see. I can remember the caribou goin' through for days, and you could just go outside the house and hear the click of hooves, and look around and see thousands of them crossin' the river.

> I can remember at Jack Wade around the Fourth of July, over the hill at Bloody Mountain--named that because old timers killed a lot of caribou there one fall, puttin' up the meat for the winter. I remember comin' through there when you could slap the caribou on the rumps as you walked by them, and they weren't afraid.

Today, one can look far and wide in the Fortymile district and not see more than a few scattered caribou, the remnants of the once great herd that made seasonal migrations through the area. Its decline can be attributed to several factors, including those made by two informants:

> I think there was too big a harvest. Fer a number of years they let people kill too many animals. So many was wasted. Now I think the wolves and bears get quite a few. There are more of them around now, especially grizzlies, I think.

And:

> Well, I imagine they've been shot up pretty bad and it made 'em change their route. But most of it's on account of feed, and they'll change their route on that account sometimes.

The bear population appears to be increasing in some sections of the Fortymile district, and local residents are quick to caution newcomers to the area to watch for them, and to not be careless with their food if they camp in the bush. During the course of this project, one man was killed by a grizzly bear near Slate Creek, and another mauled near Boundary. One informant said that the bear population was kept under better control in the early days, and that they were not permitted to become menaces to local residents.

Wolves are not normally seen in the populated regions of the Fortymile district unless they are stalking their prey. They are more visible in the winter months when they leave the seclusion of the bush in search of food.

The future of game animals in the Fortymile district is dependent on several variables, none of which can be carefully evaluated at this time. The increasing population is likely to have a detrimental affect, as it has had on wildlife in other sections of the United States. As more animals are added to the endangered species list, their protection is assured only if they are not threats to human life or property, and if some agency assumes an active role in protecting them.

One informant's observations regarding game animals seems especially noteworthy:

> Now as far as killin' game, I wouldn't kill anything if I couldn't eat it or wear it. Those guys don't know what fun is until they've watched some a this stuff. Watch moose, watch caribou, watch bear. I've seen some a the funniest damned things.

D. Mining

The future of mining in the Fortymile district appears gloomy, at best, although a number of factors which cannot be carefully evaluated at this time might change the outlook. Although few mining operations are active at this time, miners do comprise a significant percentage of the population of the interior of the Fortymile district. Their livelihoods are being threatened in some instances by stringent environmental regulations, the constantly changing status of lands, and the spiraling inflation rate. The first two of these factors are particular sore spots among some Fortymile miners.

All informants contacted in this survey were associated with gold mining to some extent, and some continue to operate mining ventures on their claims. They are probably better versed on the intricacies of mining than are some of those who are establishing regulations which affect their livelihood; yet they are denied the opportunity to provide input into the rules and regulations which govern what they can and cannot do. As one miner noted,

> I think miners should have a voice in every district. If they have a meeting, instead of [an arbitrator] setting the rules for us to go by, the miners should have a voice in the rules...Years ago the miners always had a say in the miners meetings.

One informant pointed out that current mining operations are required to meet water purity standards which are impossible to attain, and which may surpass the purity of normal stream water. Other regulations are requiring major modifications in existing mining procedures, which can be interpreted as increased expenditures with no assurance that the modifications will be acceptable.

In some instances the improved regulations are justifiable, but some complaints voiced by non-miners may be less valid. For example, it has been suggested that the muddy water resulting from some stages of the mining process is directly responsible for the poor fishing in the Fortymile district. Miners attribute the poor fishing to an overabundance of fishermen in easily-accessible areas where the fish have never flourished. As one moves farther away from the road, fishing conditions normally improve, if fish inhabit the body of water at all.

Miners also contend that they are merely agitating the water during the mining process--something that has been done since the early days. If this agitation was detrimental to the bodies of water being affected, then the effects surely would have been visible much earlier in the 1900's:

> There are two sides ta this thing, and fer what few fish--there were fish there before and they'll be there again after the mining is over...They want us to, uh, have the water as clean after it leaves our ground as when it enters our ground. Well, that's just impossible.

One miner may have best summed it up when he concluded that the plan must be to eliminate mining from the Fortymile district by constantly adding regulations that most miners cannot meet. Yet tourists and "weekend miners" are permitted to bring in portable suction dredges and operate them free of government controls, for as long as they desire. The situation seems both unfair and ironic: Those who mine gold for "recreational" purposes are free to do as they please, while those who mine as a major source of income are bound by strict regulations. Hopefully, an equitable solution will be found to pacify local miners and to reduce the restrictions they currently face. Furthermore, recreational mining should be more carefully controlled and some type of permit required.

E. Fire Control

One of the BLM's primary functions in the Fortymile Resource Area revolves around fire control. During the summer months in this heavily-forested region the danger of fires from lightning strikes

or human error is quite high, and BLM assumes the responsibility of locating, controlling and suppressing them. They conduct intensive aerial reconnaissance during the fire season, and are well-equipped to immediately respond to most fires.

Since the danger to human life and property from fires in Alaska is much lower than that in the lower 48 states, some people question the necessity of the high expenditures allocated for fire control.

One informant, for example, suggested that fire control is generally unnecessary, and upsets nature's way of maintaining an ecological balance in the forest environment. This informant pointed out that the configuration of the trees and other vegetation within the Fortymile district varies enough within any given area to prohibit any fire from destroying more than a limited acreage. Thus the land is found in varying stages of the ecological cycle, with each component serving a unique, but essential function within this cycle. For instance, certain areas within the region provide food resources for moose, and others are more suitable for caribou, sheep, bear, wolf, and small fur-bearing animals.

This informant noted that by disturbing nature's cycle and extinguishing most fires of any significance, the ecological balance is upset. Consequently, moose may migrate elsewhere if their food resources are depleted locally. This same informant mentioned that the natives formerly set deliberate fires in some portions of the region if nature had failed to do so. They were so perceptive of the needs of the wildlife within the environment they inhabited that they knew how to manage their resources. If that meant deliberately starting a fire to modify the environment so that a particular food resource might once again flourish in a given region, it was done. Ranchers and other local residents also burned off sections of ground periodically to prevent trees from taking over tracts of land used for gardens and raising hay. The current trend of prohibiting fires of any consequence to burn may have negative implications for both the wildlife and their environment within the Fortymile Resource Area.

Another negative aspect of fire control, according to one informant, is the blatant neglect of the environment that sometimes accompanies the process of extinguishing a fire. The Chicken Burn, for example (see Glick and Mertes 1976:72-73), destroyed nearly 250,000 acres of natural forestland in 1966 in the interior of the Fortymile district. Once the fire began burning out of control, heavy equipment was employed to aid in suppression of the blaze. Over 400 miles of trails were built in the area, many of which are still visible from the Taylor Highway. Interestingly, the fire was never completely controlled until the winter snows (nature's fire extinguisher) snuffed the blaze later that year.

Some maintain the belief that many of the "cat" trails were unnecessarily constructed, while others were built with little consideration being given to their effect on the environment. One informant noted that the creeks in the Chicken area were muddy for two years after the Chicken Burn, as a result of soil and other materials from the cat trails entering the various bodies of water in the proximity of the fire. Another person, who flew over the scene of the Chicken Burn several years later, was appalled at the damage the heavy equipment had done to the environment. The Chicken Burn has served as an example which will hopefully not be repeated in the future.

It must also be pointed out that many of the regulations which guide BLM Fire Control operations are not made on the local level. The Department of the Interior may not consider Alaska and her resources as being unique; thus BLM in Alaska follows guidelines established for all states with BLM-controlled lands. In some cases, for example, BLM on the local level would prefer to let certain fires burn because of the value this has in the forest succession cycle, but they are overruled on the national level. Furthermore, as one Fire Control official explained, not all fires occur in locations where uncontrolled burning is desirable, in terms of the succession cycle.

In spite of the misgivings some people have regarding fire control, it is both necessary and vital to the preservation of the Fortymile Resource Area. The complaints registered by informants in this survey and other local residents are valid, but present only one side of the picture. As both the population and tourism increase in the interior of the Fortymile district, the potential of a fire having a detrimental effect on human life or property also rises. Thus the role assumed by fire control personnel becomes even more critical. Furthermore, one cannot underestimate the contribution to the local economy made either directly or indirectly by BLM Fire Control and the personnel employed.

F. Future of the Fortymile Resource Area

No one can accurately predict the future of the Fortymile Resource Area, but it seems destined for many changes, some of which are not desired by local residents, However, more people from other regions in Alaska and the lower 48 states are attracted to the Fortymile region each year for a variety of reasons. Some enjoy its scenery, others are lured here by the gold mining and other history of the area, and many enjoy the recreational outlets readily available. It seems certain that this trend will continue, and that the demands by this influx of people for more goods and services will rise. Nonetheless, it is hoped that local communities can maintain their integrity, encourage outsiders to accept the area as it is, and not fall victim to the uncontrolled growth and development game so skillfully played by investors and promoters.

The long-time residents contacted during the course of fieldwork were uncertain about the future of the Fortymile region. Some envisioned growth only if mining once again assumes an important role in the local economy.

> The economy of the whole interior has always been based mostly on mining. There wouldn't be no road into the Fortymile or the Circle if it wasn't fer the miners...It was the miners that were responsible for the roads... The economy of the whole country is mostly dependent on the resources of the country.

One informant, perhaps looking farther ahead than some others, predicted dramatic changes, noting that the Alyeska Pipeline has paved the way for construction of more pipelines of a similar nature.

Like pioneer residents in most other communities, the Fortymile pioneers seem genuinely concerned about the future of their homeland, while recognizing how little control they actually have over its destiny. Most informants contacted are quite active in spite of the advanced years of some; one suspects a correlation between the way of life in the Fortymile region and the long, healthy lives of many of its residents. How can one not enjoy good health after having lived so close to nature for so many years?

In response to a question regarding the future of the Fortymile Resource Area, one informant pointed out that people today waste much more, and consequently use more resources. He noted that people must contend with so many rules and regulations, that many freedoms have been lost. A final statement he made is quoted here, because it may encompass the real feelings retained by many Fortymile pioneers.

> I would say that, knowin' what it was, the best days are gone. Sometimes I think I'm glad I'm old. Honest...the young people now don't know what freedom is, because now there is somebody to say, "You can't do that, you can't do that".

V

SYNOPSES OF INFORMANTS' LIVES

The author had the privilege of visiting with several long-time residents of the Fortymile district and interior Alaska during the course of fieldwork. Their cooperation and interest in local history made the oral history project both a reality and rewarding experience. During conversations with them, much was learned about their lives, why they came to Alaska, etc. Synopses of their lives are included here for the benefit of the reader. They are incomplete, yet outline the highlights of each informant's life to date.

Alice Roberts Bayless

Alice Roberts Bayless was born July 16, 1915, in Eagle, Alaska. Her mother was enroute to the nearest hospital in Dawson, Yukon Territory, from their home in Franklin, but transportation problems forced Mrs. Roberts to stop in Eagle. With the assistance of a midwife and the physician at Fort Egbert, Mrs. Roberts delivered her first child.

Her father, John Roberts, had come to Eagle in 1897 and staked claims on American Creek. From there he drifted into Franklin, where he staked claims, became postmaster, and opened a trading post which eventually became the Franklin Roadhouse. For many years the roadhouse was the focal point of life in that region, especially on Sundays, mail days, and when occasional dances were held.

Alice was taught to read and write by her parents, and she attended school when a teacher came into the area. She boarded one winter with a teacher in Chicken, and finished the equivalent of an eighth grade education. The nearest high school was in Fairbanks, and, coupled with the death of her father in 1930, Alice assumed part of the responsibility of supporting the family, which included three younger brothers.

She became a cook at a mining camp at Jack Wade in 1930 or 1931, and remained there for several years before taking a similar job for one year on Lost Chicken Hill, for Fred Whitehead. Then she cooked at a camp at Manley Hot Springs for two years.

Alice met her husband, Howard Bayless, when he was constructing and improving airfields in the Fortymile region. After they married, they moved to the Kuiukuk region where Howard was employed for three years. When World War II broke out, Howard worked on special military assignments to aid in war effort.

Following the war, the Baylesses and Alice's three brothers, Richard, Robert, and Ellis, mined in Franklin on family property for three years. When mining expenses became too high to warrant further mining, they began freighting supplies into the Fortymile region. Eventually, they moved to Tok, where they opened a trucking company, which is operated today by Robert and Ellis Roberts. They branched out and bought a trucking business in Copper Center, which is operated by Richard Roberts today.

Presently Howard and Alice, and Robert and Betty Ditman are mining on a leased claim on Chicken Creek, called Al-Bet Mining, which they work with a bulldozer and dragline. They reside in Copper Center during the winter months.

Paul Bytell

Paul Bytell was born January 25, 1896, in Antigo, Wisconsin, where his parents had moved from New York in the 1880's. The family home was a homestead on a timber claim near the Chippewa Indian Reservation.

Paul remained near the family home and worked until World War I broke out. He then served in the Army in England and France. He returned to Wisconsin after the war and remained until 1925.

For the next few years Paul held a variety of jobs, including working in a machine shop with a brother in Texas, and following the wheat harvest in the Great Plains. He spent the fall of 1927 on a ranch in North Dakota working for a man who had been one of his superior officers in World War I. Later he toured the southwestern United States with a friend and ended up working in Salem, Oregon.

Eventually he met up with his brother, Jim, in Grant's Pass, Oregon. Jim had been in Alaska from 1922-1928, and was forced to leave after suffering snowblindness. However, he had always hoped to return, and encouraged Paul to accompany him. So, in 1932 they began making plans for the long trip. After outfitting in Seattle, they traveled to Alaska, arriving in Fairbanks in the fall of 1932. Paul describes the trip from Fairbanks to Chicken:

> "We stayed in Fairbanks that winter and got a dog team and a sled and an outfit. Then we drove down the Richardson Highway out of Fairbanks to a little town, McCarthy, which was on the Big Delta River. And we crossed the river there in a cable cage, yeah. From there on we followed Indian trails across country to Tanacross. Took our time, we wasn't in any hurry, you know. We come over from Lake Mansfield, following the old telegraph line, you know, from Valdez to Eagle. It was still fairly open.

> Mosquito Flats, the big flat there at the head of that Mosquito River, up, uh, til then we had good trails--up to that village of Kechumstuk, you've heard of it, at Mosquito Fork. But from there on we had to break our own trail. That was along in April, the early part of April. The snow was quite deep yet. I forget just when we did hit Chicken--it musta been about the middle of April when we finally got here.
>
> An old timer, Dick Mitchell, he had a ranch over in Mosquito Flats, and he had a cabin here in town. He offered us the use of his cabin when we got here. We stayed around here for, oh, I don't know, a couple weeks maybe. Finally, we lit out, down river, then went up the North Fork. Hadn't been nobody trappin' or prospectin' fer years. We figured it was good country ta get into."

From then until 1952, Paul and Jim trapped, prospected, and mined, primarily in the North Fork country. They initially lived in a cabin that had been built by the Roger brothers of Eagle, located on Joe Wilson Creek, but eventually built their own. One of their cabins, built in 1946, is still standing, and is in remarkably good condition.

Paul worked at Ladd Field in Fairbanks during World War II, and worked for Bob Steele in his hotel in Fairbanks during the winter of 1945. The following spring he became restless and returned to the Fortymile.

Jim became ill in 1952 and eventually passed away. In 1953, Paul moved to Chicken and went to work for the FE Company which had begun a dredging operation on Chicken Creek. Paul worked for them until they ceased operations in 1965, and was hired as caretaker of the property, a job he has today.

Wyman Fritsch

Wyman Fritsch was born in Sedro-Woolley, Washington, in 1910, and spent his entire childhood in that area. After finishing high school in 1927, Wyman accompanied his father to Eagle, Alaska, to settle the affairs of an uncle who had been killed in a hunting accident. The uncle, who had been in the Yukon area since the Klondike rush in 1898, was mining outside of Eagle at that time. Wyman and his father remained in the area and mined on American Creek for many years.

Eventually Wyman went to work for the Alaska Road Commission during World War II, and later assisted in construction of the Taylor Highway, the first road that connected Eagle with a 162 mile stretch of gravel road connecting Eagle with Tetlin Junction and the Alaskan Highway. He retired from the State Highway Department in 1974, and currently resides in Eagle. He and another long-time resident of Fortymile, Al Stout, have a small mining operation on American Creek that they work during the summer months.

Although Wyman is much better acquainted with mining and life in the area surrounding the Seventymile River, he heard much about the people and their activities in the Fortymile district. In addition, miners from the Fortymile district periodically visited in Eagle, and found it a convenient point from which to go to or return from Dawson.

Barney Hansen

Burnett "Barney" Hansen was born in Napa County, California on September 28, 1894. About 1900 the family moved to Australia on account of Mrs. Hansen's health. After 3 years they returned to southern California, where they remained for another 4 years, until Barney's father passed away.

The family then returned to Auckland, New Zealand, where Mrs. Hansen had been raised. Barney remained there until he turned 16 years of age, then returned to the United States in order to retain his U.S. citizenship. For several years he worked in Yakima County, Washington, and at his employer's urging, made several trips to Seattle. Eventually he had the opportunity to go to Skagway and Whitehorse in 1915, and in later years he made more trips farther north.

Barney met Matt Hoffman, a former blacksmith at Ft. Egbert in Eagle, while in Washington. Hoffman introduced Barney to Bert Bryant, an early day miner in the Seventymile River country (on Alder Creek). In 1929, Barney left Washington and arrived in Eagle, and eventually went to the Seventymile country with Bryant.

Barney mined in the Seventymile country for numerous years, and also worked for the Fairbanks Exploration Company. Being very mechanically-inclined, he was often called upon to handle major problems the FE Company might be having with its mining equipment.

Barney and his wife, Ole, currently reside in Eagle, their home for many years. Barney is quite active and raises an excellent garden each summer.

Borghilde "Ole" Hansen

Born in Norway in 1897, Ole and her mother lived together until moving to North Dakota around 1900. Ole's father was aboard a freighter that went down in the late 1890's, and was never heard from again. His brother had been in the United States and returned to Norway to ask Ole and her mother to accompany him back to North Dakota.

Following her childhood on a farm, Ole attended the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. While there, she met a girl who had lived in Bethel, Alaska, and became interested in going to Alaska herself. Ole applied for a teaching position and eventually received an offer to teach in a Bureau of Indian Affairs school in Eagle Village, Alaska.

She arrived in Eagle in 1925, following an eventful journey. She missed the regular boat going north and booked passage on a smaller one. Upon arrival at Fortymile at the mouth of the river of the same name, she was delayed several days waiting for the mail carrier to come by on his way from Dawson to Eagle. Ole assisted Mrs. Schultz with her duties at the Fortymile Roadhouse until Percy de Wolfe, the mail carrier, arrived.

Ole taught at Eagle Village for 13 consecutive years, and provided some medical care to the local residents, as she had completed some short courses in nursing. In the early 1950's, Ole was postmaster in Eagle.

Today, she and her husband, Barney, reside in Eagle. Although she is not as active as in previous years, due to a hip injury, Ole enjoys having visitors and reminiscing about her life in Alaska.

Engbret "Eddie" Johansen

Engbret Johansen is one of the few early pioneers of the Fortymile region still alive and residing in Alaska. Born on March 12, 1894 to a fisherman's wife in Norway, Engbret remained with the family until age eighteen, when he journied to Alaska with an uncle who had staked a claim on Ingle Creek (one of Engbret's brothers, Anton, was also in Alaska when Engbret arrived, and was also involved in the mining venture).

His uncle paid their passage to North America, and they arrived in Dawson in December, 1912. Engbret recalled pulling a hand sled containing his luggage from Dawson to Eagle via the Yukon River, and overland to Chicken, where they arrived on Christmas Eve with the temperature registering a cool -40 degrees.

During that first winter of mining on the Ingle Creek claim, Engbret thawed the ground with steam, dug out the potential paydirt, and piled it up for sluicing in the spring and summer (when running water was available from the creek). His share of the profits for the first year amounted to $500, which he used to repay his uncle for travel expenses from Norway, and to purchase supplies for the following year.

Ingle Creek had previously been staked and prospected, but apparently no profitable ground had been located. Engbret's uncle was retrieving about $2.50 worth of gold per pan, with this being possibly the first gold taken out of their holdings on Ingle Creek.

His uncle had constructed a cabin during his first venture, so Engbret and his brother constructed a new one to live in. Engbret described their cabin as an 18' X 25' structure with two beds, a table, half a dozen chairs, and a cook stove (which had eventually replaced a Yukon stove).

"Eddie" occasionally traded with the natives who came into the Chicken area from Kechumstuk, and this led to his becoming acquainted with his wife, Mary, who he married in 1922. Their marriage ceremony was performed by Charlie Cole, the Claims Commissioner, in Jack Wade at that time. They are the parents of three children.

At some point in time, Engbret and Anton took over the claim on Ingle Creek, where they mined until 1932, then sold to another miner. During the time he mined on Ingle Creek, a neighbor from his community in Norway, Amund Hagan, came into the area and mined nearby. After selling the claim, "Eddie" moved to Chicken and mined on the benchland of Chicken Creek with an unnamed partner. Prospects were a little better there than on Ingle Creek, but they eventually sold out to a Mr. Crawford "for a song", as Engbret put it.

"Eddie" then returned to Ingle Creek where he remained until 1970, when failing health prevented him from completing the required assessment work on his claim. His ground is presently leased out to another party. Then he returned to Chicken where he and Mary resided with a daughter, and eventually into Fairbanks, where they now live. Eddie owns a cabin near Chicken which the family uses intermittently during the summer months.

Although he never made any big strikes, Eddie has no regrets about having been a miner, enjoyed being his own boss, and preferred working to suit himself.

Molly McCombe

Molly McCombe was born in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1912, and spent her early life in that country. She lived in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a while, then went to Skagway via steamship, by rail over the old White Pass to Whitehorse, and from there to Dawson, Yukon Territory, on a riverboat. She was employed in a restaurant in Dawson for six years, from 1934 to 1940.

In 1940, Molly and Bob McCombe drove to Boundary in a truck, walked to Lassen (now Walker Fork Campground), and were married there. An airplane pilot and local boy served as witnesses to only the Fortymile's second marriage ceremony performed by the U.S. Commissioner for the Fortymile district.

At that time, Molly's husband had been freighting supplies from Dawson to Canyon Creek, Walker Fork, Jack Wade, and Chicken. Four or five mining operations and numerous individual miners in the area were reliant on this freighting concern for their food and other supplies.

They spent the winter of 1940 in Fairbanks, then returned to the Forty-mile region until World War II broke out. Most of the mining and freighting machinery in the area was leased to the U.S. government for use in the war effort, and mining operations came to an abrupt halt. From 1942 to 1946, Bob and his partners freighted goods from Valdez to Fairbanks on the Alaskan Highway. They were the first commercial truckers from Dawson Creek to Fairbanks on this highway.

In 1946 the McCombes moved to Chicken and purchased a roadhouse and other buildings located on Chicken Creek. The roadhouse had originally been built in 1906 and had been called the Struck and Van Hook, or Chicken Creek Hotel. For seven years it was operated under the name of Chicken Creek Lodge. During that time Bob also freighted and did maintenance work on airstrips in the area.

When the FE Company out of Fairbanks decided to begin dredging operations on Chicken Creek in 1953, the McCombes sold their property to this mining concern. It was felt that business might be negatively affected if the roads in the area were rerouted, and the company needed a base headquarters, which this property conveniently provided.

The McCombes then purchased the South Fork Lodge farther north on the Taylor Highway and operated it for 19 years. Highway crews, government personnel, miners, and a few tourists provided most of their business in the early 1950's, with tourist traffic becoming more prevalent in later years.

Bob and Molly now live near Mosquito Fork most of the year, although they go outside in the winter months.

Bill Meldrum

The son of a farmer and his wife in the northeastern highlands of Scotland, Bill Meldrum was born in 1898. He remained there until 1919, working on the family farm, and then served in World War I.

Following the war, he went to Canada, and worked on the large wheat farms in the Canadian prairies. Being young and having the desire to travel, Bill eventually went to Dawson, Yukon Territory, and on to Eagle.

During the summer of 1924, he worked for Harry Ross, who was mining on American Creek, and later went to Fourth of July Creek near the small mining community of Nation, northwest of Eagle on the Yukon River. He spent the winter on Big Washington Creek, just over the hill from Fourth of July, and recalled seeing an abundance of game in that area.

Bill remained in that region for seven winters and had a pet moose called "Frosty" visit him on a regular basis. In the late 1920's, he began prospecting and trapping in the North Fork, and moved to Chicken in 1931. One summer, Bill and Chris Nelson were the only people in the North Fork country, but neither was too successful in their prospecting activities.

In Chicken, Bill fixed up an existing cabin below the mouth of Stonehouse Creek that first year, constructing his own later that same year. In 1933 and 1934, Bill mined claims on Chicken and Stonehouse Creeks, and continued trapping during the winter months.

Bill was married to Fred Whitehead's sister for several years, but she passed away in 1945.

Eventually, Bill became the sole miner on Stonehouse Creek and continues to work there today by himself. He is quite active and raises a garden each summer to supplement food purchased in stores.

Andy Peterson

Andy was born in Norway in 1887, and joined a whaling expedition as a young man, which sailed into the Bering Strait region in the early 1900's. Sometime later, he and several associates ventured into the Yukon, hiking overland from White Horse to Dawson.

He was employed with a dredging company operating in Bonanza Creek for several years, and survived a near fatal accident which has affected his health since that time. Bonanza Creek was the scene of some of the richest gold mining in the Klondike, but was past its heyday when Andy was there.

Andy served in World War I and sustained minor injuries in combat.

Although he has spent very little time in the Fortymile district, Andy recalls making pancakes which he referred to as "Fortymile hotcakes", for some unexplained reason. In recent years, Andy sought a partner to join him in prospecting certain locations in the Fortymile, but advancing age and failing health thwarted these plans.

Andy visisted his homeland some years ago and found several relatives, but none who remembered him after nearly a 50-year absence. Today he resides outside of Tok and gets along pretty well considering his age. It is unfortunate that he is unable to recall many details of his early days in Alaska, as the available information suggests that he has had many memorable experiences.

Knut Peterson

Another long-time resident of Alaska is Knut Peterson, who first entered the state in 1923. Born in Denmark in July, 1894, he came to the United States as a young man in 1914. He worked in North Dakota until World War I, then served two years in the army, and returned to North Dakota after the war.

Jobs were not plentiful there, however, so Knut moved to the state of Washington seeking work. While there, he observed many people traveling to the Kennicott Mine, near Cordova, Alaska, where good paying jobs were readily available. In 1923, Knut joined the procession and secured a job in the mine.

Later, he prospected in the Chisana River country for several years, and is a relatively recent arrival to the Fortymile region. By the time he arrived in the early 1950's, the country had been pretty thoroughly prospected, and mining expenses were considerably higher than in the earlier days.

Knut first discovered gold in 1930 on Granite Creek, a tributary of the Chisana River about 10 miles above Mentasta.

He worked for the Alaska Road Commission in the late 1940's, and remembers Tok in those days as being a store and contractor's camp, inhabited by men working on the road in the area.

Today Knut resides near Tok where he devotes much of his time to writing. He recently completed a book about his recollections of life in Alaska, entitled When Alaska Was Free. It will be published in the fall of 1976, and will undoubtedly be interesting reading for those with an interest in the history of Alaska.

Art Purdy

Dawson, Yukon Territory, was the birthplace of Art Purdy in 1911. His family moved into the Fortymile area in 1918, at which time his father, Frank Purdy took a job with the Fortymile Power and Dredging Company on the Dennison Fork. This corporate venture folded in 1920, and Frank had to accept mining equipment in lieu of regular wages.

The family moved to the mouth of Ingle Creek, where Frank entered into a partnership on a mining claim, which was being worked with boilers, scrapers and hoists. This turned out to be an unprofitable venture, so the family moved into Chicken in 1921, and Frank began a partnership with George Lysell, a former freighter in the Fortymile district who had worked for John Powers for several years. They purchased claims on Myers Fork from a man named Davis.

Art and his brother, Fred, eventually purchased some mining claims on Myers Fork, and mined there until 1961, when Art received serious injuries in a mining accident. Fred and Johnny Rambard finished mining that year, but no major work has been done on the claim since that time.

Art and Fred were well-known for their fur-trapping abilities in the early days. They were generally pretty successful with their traplines, and this was often a major source of income in years when the mining had been poor. Art and George Lysell also did some freighting from the mouth of the Fortymile River to Chicken with a small caterpillar. When Lee Steele had a mining operation on Dome Creek, Art drove a caterpillar for him for 18 months in 1929-30.

Art served in the military during World War II for 40 months, at Ladd Field in Fairbanks and in the continental United States. He and his wife, the former Agnes Johansen, raised a family of seven children, and currently live in Fairbanks, although they have a home and property near Chicken.

Regarding the mining business, Art made the following observations:

> "Being in the mining business, you might say you're a jack of all trades and don't have any diploma to prove it. You had to be your own carpenter, and do your own building, and do your own fixing if you break down. A lot of times you had to make your own parts with a file and a forge...You don't get no credit for it, though--you go to school and you get credit for it."

Fred Terwilliger

Born in South Dakota in 1901, Fred was five years old when his family moved to California, where he spent the remainder of his childhood. By 1919, he had saved enough money to leave for Alaska, "to get away from civilization." Prior to the Depression, Fred lived in southeastern Alaska, Cook's Inlet, and Fairbanks. Then when the economy slumped in 1929-30, he ventured into the interior of Alaska where he has lived since that time.

Fred's first memory of the Fortymile district was his arrival at Middle Fork in the winter of 1932-33. Some mining was being done on Gold Run, a tributary of the North Fork, at that time, but no one was making much more than a grubstake.

Fred held a variety of jobs during his years in the Fortymile, as did most other men in the area. He prospected and did some mining, although he never had the "gold fever", as did some others. He spent more time trapping and cutting wood for the dredges in the area, and mined only as a sideline. Fred was either acquainted with, or worked with many of the old timers in the Fortymile district, including George Matlock, Ole Burg, Ed Janeau, John Powers, and Jack Brooks. His activities took him to many parts of the Fortymile and surrounding regions, and he is well-acquainted with most of the terrain in this area.

When the Steese and Taylor Highways were constructed, Fred found employment with the companies building these roads. Later, he worked for the Alaska Road Commission, which eventually became the State Highway Department.

Fred and his wife, Millie, who he met while living in southeastern Alaska, live outside Tok today. She has been quite active in the political arena, while Fred is well-known for the kippered salmon he prepares in the summer after the annual salmon runs on the Yukon.

Fred Whitehead

A true "sourdough" in every sense of the word, Fred Whitehead first came to Alaska in 1910. Born near Portland, Oregon, on January 24, 1892, Fred was raised on a farm near Portland and remained there until the early 1900's. After his father's death, the family moved to Seattle.

Fred has lived and worked in many sections of Alaska and the Yukon Territory during his long life in the north. He gained employment in a cannery in southeastern Alaska when he first arrived in 1910, and later worked in the Kennicott Copper Mines until World War I. After serving in the U.S. Army, Fred returned to Alaska and his former job, but eventually moved on to the Anchorage region, where he trapped and worked on bridge construction for the railroad. Later, he worked for the Alaska Road Commission and on a dredge in the Kuskokwim region.

He finally set out on his own in 1927, purchasing mining claims on Lost Chicken Hill in the heart of the Fortymile district. Since that time he has prospected and/or mined on Chicken Creek, Walker Fork, Middle Fork, Liberty Creek, and many other sections of the Fortymile Resource Area, in addition to other scattered areas, including Manley Hot Springs, Circle, the Seventymile and Sixtymile regions, and in the Yukon Territory.

Fred either constructed or improved airfields at Boundary, Steele Creek, Upper Jack Wade, Franklin, and Chicken. He also constructed a stretch of road in the Fortymile region that preceded the Taylor Highway. Fred also brought the first hydraulic "cat" into the Fortymile district in the winter of 1936-37.

Fred is currently drift mining on a claim near Dawson, Yukon Territory, and has high hopes of uncovering a rich paystreak that has remained undiscovered from the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1800's. His general state of health and well-being attests to the wholesome life he and so many others have found in the interior of Alaska.

VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion

Several features of Fortymile history have been explored in this report. The scope of the subject was too great to permit more than a cursory examination of the wealth of available materials. Of primary importance in the compilation and preservation of the history of the Fortymile Resource Area are the many long-time residents of that district still alive and living in the area. Many were receptive to inquiries about historical information as they remembered it, but time limitations prohibited many of these rich sources of information to be contacted in an extensive fashion.

Fortymile history focuses on native Athapaskans, gold miners, fur trappers, and the many changes brought about by modernization. Several events of historical importance occured in the Fortymile district, emphasizing the role this area assumes in the overall history of Alaska. Since local history is conspicuous by its incompleteness, BLM can provide an invaluable service to local communities, the State of Alaska, and to the United States, by continuing its efforts to collect and compile the rich heritage of the Fortymile Resource Area.

A list of recommendations follows, which may aid future researchers in their efforts to conduct historical research in the Fortymile district. They are designed as guidelines which may or may not be useful to all researchers, but should be given consideration as local historical research continues.

This report is both incomplete and lacking in detail in many instances. However, it is believed that enough information has been presented to serve as an adequate foundation for further research. The author merely scratched the surface of Fortymile history during his internship; now is the time to deal with it more extensively and thoroughly.

B. Recommendations

During the course of this Fortymile history project, the author has explored numerous aspects of the subject from a variety of perspectives. Because of the wealth of information available on a large number of topics, closure was gained on almost none. However, a framework has been developed around which more extensive historical research can, and should be conducted while the resources are still available. Consequently, a number of recommendations are set forth in this report which can serve as guidelines for future stages of the Fortymile history project. These recommendations are

based on the author's experiences during his twelve-week internship and on his impressions of what can expedite the collection of Fortymile history. It is hoped that BLM Resource personnel will give careful consideration to these recommendations as they plan successive stages of their collection of Fortymile history.

1. General Recommendations

   a. Once an intern is selected to conduct historical research, he should be provided with as much background information as possible before he begins his actual research. If the intern can be selected two or three months prior to the beginning date of the internship, he will have the opportunity to review materials and hasten his orientation process upon arrival to the field. This information can include BLM and WICHE reports, books and articles pertaining to one or more aspects of Fortymile history, maps and photographs of the area (a slide presentation is ideal), and so on.

   b. Orientation upon arrival to the study area should include a guided tour conducted by the intern's supervisor. Introductions to local residents who might have an interest in the project, or who are willing to participate in it, can hasten the orientation process. The intern also benefits by having his role within the overall BLM program framework explained to other employees, who might otherwise not recognize the contribution he is making to the local agency. Historical research tends to differ markedly from the content of many other BLM programs.

   c. Much can be gained by having finalized housing, transportation, and other arrangements before the intern arrives at the study area. He should know what assistance and services are to be provided by his sponsors, and his sponsors should fulfill their commitments as best as they can. Anxieties can be reduced if the intern is not troubled by logistical procedures that could have been dealt with before he entered the field. If the intern is to rank at the bottom of the priority scale, the sponsoring agency should be flexible in their expectations of the quality and content of his work.

   d. The scope of a twelve-week internship should be limited to a subject area that can be adequately covered in that short period of time, yet broad enough the permit the intern to explore several optional topical areas. In some instances, resources that were assumed to be readily available may be missing or inaccessible; if so, the intern should have other topics with which he can deal.

e. The intern and his supervisor should meet on a regular basis, thus permitting each to know how the project is proceeding and what problems may be arising (if any). The supervisor should offer assistance if it is needed, and show enthusiasm for the project being completed.

This does not mean that the supervisor should determine every move made by the intern, as this is likely to only hamper his work. Yet the supervisor should be accessible if and when problems do arise.

f. At the outset, the intern and his sponsor should prepare a tentative timetable and schedule of activities. While it may not be feasible to follow the timetable in every respect, it does provide general direction for the intern. Timetables for several internships of differing lengths are provided later in this report, and illustrate, in a very general fashion, how such a schedule might be organized.

g. If the intern has been assigned an advisory committee, he should be introduced to them, individually if not collectively, and encouraged to seek their input into the research project. If the advisory committee is comprised of members of the local community, they might serve as excellent initial contacts for the intern.

h. The intern should carefully examine all available information relevant to his research topic before finalizing his data collection format, and avoid replicating what has previously been completed. If resource materials are not locally available, arrangements should be made to have them accessible to the intern when he needs them. These materials might include those used for orientation purposes, but may include those of a more specific and detailed nature.

i. If several intern projects are being conducted simultaneously, they should be integrated whenever possible, and treated as projects that complement each other. The project completed by the author would have been of considerably more value to the overall BLM planning program if it had been incorporated with a historical resource inventory completed by two other interns. However, the two projects were defined as separate and unique endeavors, and did not complement each other as well as they could have.

j. Since the collection of oral history is a rather unique type of work within the BLM framework, the intern should have access to both equipment and transportation during the evening hours and on weekends. He should also have access to office facilities at these times so that his work with tape recordings does not disturb other BLM personnel. This was not a problem encountered during the course of fieldwork this summer, and Fortymile Resource Area personnel were quite cooperative in this respect.

2. Oral History Recommendations

a. The intern should consult this report and BLM files to determine what information has been compiled and which community members were contacted. Local citizens have shared a considerable amount of information to various people for various purposes, and some are becoming less responsive to intrusions on their time. Rather than contacting people who have repeated the information to several researchers, the intern should develop new contacts in the community. It is probable that many other residents would be more than willing to share their insights on an aspect of Fortymile history if they were given that opportunity. A partial list of potential informants to be given consideration is included later in this report.

b. The acquisition of native (Athapaskan) oral history is desirable and constitutes a fundamental aspect of Fortymile history. However, problems have been encountered in obtaining full cooperation from residents of native villages in the periphery of the Fortymile Resource Area. Some are skeptical of what BLM will do with the information, as BLM is often perceived as having a major role in determining the status of many acres of native lands.

If native oral history is to be dealt with by an intern, he should devote all his efforts to that specific project. Cross-cultural research requires a much more concerted effort on the part of the researcher than similar research in his own cultural setting. He must obtain approval from local village councils, develop rapport with local village residents, and maintain a low profile within the community. It is useful if the researcher is of native ancestry, resides in or near a local native village, or is assisted by a native from the local region. This may reduce both social and language barriers, while enhancing the quality of the information received.

BLM is strongly encouraged to continue their efforts at recording Athapaskan oral history, but they should give careful consideration to the manner in which it is done. The opportunity exists for BLM to develop a better relationship with the local native village communities than is now the case.

c. Arrangements should be made for the intern to explore Fortymile history from the Canadian perspective, and through persons and reference materials available in Canada. Much history relevant to the Fortymile district surrounds the now-abandoned-community of Forty Mile, which was one of the gateways to the Fortymile region. Dawson, Yukon Territory, is an obvious starting point for researching Fortymile history from a Canadian perspective.

d. Life histories of certain informants should be completed if at all possible. As in the case of native oral history, however, recording of life histories is time-consuming and requires much patience. A rare opportunity exists to record the rich life histories of several Fortymile pioneers, if the intern desires to devote a great deal of time to such a project.

e. The history of females and their roles in the development of the Fortymile district has not been well-documented. While males dominated the mining scene in the early days, females were present and contributed much to the development of the region. Although information of this nature is understandably sketchy, it should be considered a priority item while some of the long-time residents of the Fortymile district are still alive.

f. Community input into the oral history project will aid in assuring a positive and enthusiastic response to the research. If local citizens recognize the contribution they can make to the preservation of local history, they are more likely to encourage others to do the same. Some community members may be willing to contribute their time and resources to such a project. Copies of the final report should then be made available to local schools, libraries, and public interest groups.

g. The intern should maintain a flexible and irregular work schedule. Informants are frequently more accessible in the evenings and on weekends, and may prefer to share their recollections at these times. For example, the author devoted approximately 25 hours to his research on Saturday and Sunday, and considered this to be one of his most productive periods in the field.

h. It is highly desirable to have written transcriptions made of all taped interviews, thus making the information more accessible to the general public, students, and others interested in Fortymile history. While this is a tedious job, it ensures that the material will not be lost if the tape recording would accidentally be lost or destroyed.

3. Suggested Research Topics

a. Histories of the communities of Tok, Tanacross, Northway, Tetlin Junction, Dot Lake, and other small communities in the Fortymile district are both desirable and essential to a comprehensive history of the Fortymile Resource Area. Long-time residents of these communities should be contacted and urged to participate in the preservation of the heritage of their home communities.

b. Mining history of other regions within or near the Fortymile Resource Area not covered in this report should be explored. The general areas surrounding the Sixtymile and Seventymile Rivers should not be overlooked as not having a relationship to Fortymile mining history. For example, a number of prominent Fortymile miners also maintained mining claims in the Seventymile district (near Nation and Fourth of July Creeks), and numerous trappers in the Fortymile district had traplines in the area around the Charley River.

c. Video tapes should be made of individuals and topics which lend themselves to such an approach. Some elderly residents in the Fortymile district are among the last to remember the details of certain mining methods, craft construction, and other facets of early-day life. Examples of important video tape subjects include the following:

1. Native birch bark basket construction

2. Construction of snowshoes and small hand sleds

3. Cabin construction

4. Step-by-step description of the workings of a dredge.

5. Operating a rocker box

6. Prospecting for gold

7. Preserving and tanning hides (Athapaskan-style)

The value of video tapes cannot be over-emphasized, but they must be carefully planned and undertaken by skilled personnel.

d. Certain topics presented in this report have merely been outlined and can be expanded if the interest is shown and the necessary information available (and it is in many instances). For example, much more can be learned about fur trapping in the interior of Alaska by visiting with those who trapped in the early days, as well as with contemporary trappers.

e. The various trails entering the Fortymile district should be mapped and efforts made to preserve them if possible. The John Powers mail trail from Eagle to Chicken was used for many years, and served as a primary route of travel for those who entered the interior of the district from Eagle. It could be incorporated into other BLM planning, too. For example, a scenic trail carved out of John Powers mail trail would have both historical value and special scenic qualities.

C. Internship Timetables

1. Twelve-week Internship

Weeks 1 & 2: Orientation
Guided tour of study area
Establish initial contacts with local residents and potential informants
Develop a data collection format
Determine primary research topics

3: Begin field research and data collection
Modify data collection format if necessary
Prepare rough outline for final report

4-6: Continue data collection
Begin organizing data
Evaluate data collected to date

7: Arrange follow-up interviews with informants to fill in missing data
Conduct social visits with informants
Plan library research if necessary

8: Continue data collection
Continue organization of data
Reconsider format for final report

9: Complete data collection and interviews
Begin final report

10: Recheck data and fill in any gaps
Plan final visits with informants, if possible

11-12: Organize research materials and add to existing library collection
Complete final paper

2. Fourteen-week Internship

Not unlike the twelve-week internship, this one permits more time for data collection and for preparation of the final report. The extra time available permits either more diversification in terms of subject matter, or more intensive examination of a limited number of topics.

3. Sixteen-week Internship

This is probably the ideal length of time for a one-summer internship, as it permits more time for each stage of the project (orientation, data collection, and report preparation). The intern has more time to develop rapport with actual and potential informants, which is important to the success of his research efforts.

An intern working under a twelve-week contract may find that he is finally feeling comfortable with his work at about the time his project must be completed. The extra four weeks can be quite useful, while enhancing the overall value of the final report.

4. Six-month Internship

An even more attractive internship would extend over a six-month period, during which time the intern would have the opportunity to integrate a wealth of historical information derived from a variety of sources into a final report.

During the autumn months, many Fortymile residents are more accessible than in the June-through-August period. Thus the intern may find informants more cooperative and less preoccupied by other activities.

The six-month internship is favorable for an intern who wishes to conduct research in the native villages, or to complete one or more life histories with long-time residents of the study area.

5. Two-year Internship

Another alternative that has merit involves hiring the same intern for two consecutive summer research periods. This eliminates the need for repeating the orientation process and for allowing the intern extra time for adjusting to the new surroundings.

If the intern is planning to return to the same field setting for a second summer, he can organize and research much of his planned work during the remainder of the year.

If this idea is to be given serious consideration, it should be so indicated in the job description. All applicants for the position can then give thought to how their educational/occupational plans would be affected by being committed to an internship for two summers.

D. Interviewing Procedures

1. A master list of informants should be prepared from which prospective informants can be contacted. It is useful to rank informants according to their priority in the intern's research plans.

2. When prospective informants are contacted, the objectives of the research should be carefully explained to them, and the value of their contribution emphasized. The intern might wish to indicate specific topics of interest to informants who agree to participate in his project. This permits the informant to think about the subject matter before the actual interview.

3. Before conducting a personal interview, the intern should prepare a general list of questions or topical areas of interest, and gain as much familiarity with the subject area as possible. He should attempt to have a background that will permit him to intelligently discuss topics of interest with his informant during the interview.

4. The intern should plan to visit each informant several times during the course of fieldwork. Some visits should be social calls during which notebooks and tape recorders are visibly absent. If the intern is to develop rapport with prospective or actual informants, he must provide them with the opportunity to learn more about him and his background. If the opportunity arises, the intern should offer assistance to informants in their everyday activities, illustrating to them that he is interested in them as people, as well as informants.

5. If personal interviews are to be recorded on tape, prior approval should be obtained from the informant. Written approval is also necessary before the intern or sponsoring agency should use the taped information for any purpose. If the informant is willing to have the interview recorded, the intern should have the courtesy to gain his written approval before making the tape recordings available to outside sources.

E. Personal Recommendations

More extensive research must be completed in the Fortymile Resource Area before a comprehensive history can be compiled. Not only is a wealth of information available which can be integrated into an important contribution to Alaskan history, but much enthusiasm has been generated during the initial stages of this research. It is important for BLM to continue its historical research without delay, while the sources of information are easily accessible.

From the author's perspective, certain topics should be given high priority as Fortymile historical research continues. These are topics which would have been pursued had more time been available during the summer of 1976, and should be given consideration by future researchers.

1. Several informants not previously contacted are among the oldest residents living in the area. They are listed with the priority informants designated later in this chapter, and can contribute much general information about local history.

2. Unless an appropriate intern can be selected, it is unlikely that oral history research conducted in native villages will be as productive as that pursued elsewhere. In spite of native history being an integral feature of Fortymile history, the limited time allocated for field research limits the potential success of such an endeavor. Ideally, two interns would be employed, and one could concentrate on native informants and interpreting the importance of Athapaskan culture on local history.

3. Histories of local communities are important, and may generate interest with local residents. It is probable that local persons would contribute both time and materials to such an effort, thus enhancing the project and its scope.

4. Life histories are important, but the amount of information derived from a life history is small when compared to that garnered in several less intensive interviews. It is recommended that life histories for one or two key informants be considered early in the internship and pursued if both time and interest permit.

5. It is important to contact former Fortymile residents by letter or telephone and encourage their input into the history project. This, too, should be done early in the research period so that the former residents have an opportunity to respond to historical inquiries.

6. Research should be conducted in Yukon Territory to determine what information and resources are available regarding Fortymile history. This input is fundamental to a complete history, and can initiate a cooperative venture between Canada and the United States to preserve the rich history of the Fortymile River and surrounding regions.

There are topical areas the author would puruse if he continued historical research in the Fortymile Resource Area. These seem most critical at this writing and must not be overlooked as being significant elements of further research.

F. Utilization and Storage of Tapes

1. Use of high-quality cassette tapes is recommended to ensure high quality reproduction and a long life for recorded oral history material. Maxell 60-minute tapes or others of comparable quality have been recommended by other oral historians who have experimented with a variety of brand names.

2. Extreme care must be exercised in playing oral history recordings, because of the danger of accidental erasure or other damage. The tape recorder used should be examined for any defects and repaired before the tape is played. Routine maintenance of the recorder is generally all that is necessary.

3. Cassette tapes should be wound off and re-wound at least once a year to prevent the development of magnetic fields within the spools, that may affect the recorded sound.

4. Special care must be used in storing cassette tapes. They must not come into contact with the magnetic fields of electric motors and similar equipment. Magnets and compasses must also be avoided, as should metal detection equipment like that used at most airports. Accidental exposure to any of these can distort or destroy the recorded material.

5. It is best to store tapes in a durable wooden box equipped with a secure lid. This will aid in preventing breakage and keeping the tapes organized. They must not be stored in any type of metal container.

6. A check-out form should be included with the tape collection, which requests that persons using the tapes indicate when and for what purpose they were used. This will assist Resource personnel in caring for the tapes and determining their use rates.

7. It is important that a duplicate copy of each tape recording be stored in a safe place, so that precious oral history material is not lost if tapes are accidentally or otherwise destroyed.

G. Interview Description Form

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Bureau of Land Management
Fortymile Resource Area
P.O. Box 307
Tok, Alaska 99780

[INTERVIEW DESCRIPTION FORM]

Name of Informant:

Residence:

Age:

Interview Setting:

Date:

Location:

Time of Day:

Conditions:

Miscellaneous Notes:

H. Information Release Form

BLM
P.O. Box 307
Tok, Alaska 99780

I hereby authorize the Bureau of Land Management, Fortymile Resource Area, to use for scholarly and educational purposes, the tape recordings on Fortymile history made with Mr. Terry L. Haynes during the summer of 1976.

Date of Agreement

_____

Name or Names of Informant(s)

_____

_____

Address of Informant(s)

_____

_____

Name of Interviewer

_____

Address of Interviewer

_____

1. Potential Informants (*Priority Informants)

A. Alaskan Residents

Boundary: "Action" Jackson

Chicken: Howard Bayless
*Vern and Molly Weaver - Lost Chicken Hill

Dome Creek: Dave Weston

Dot Lake: *Abraham and Eva Luke (Athapaskan)
Andrew Isaac

Eagle: *Vince James (former U.S. Customs agent)
*Mr. & Mrs. Elmer J. Nelson (Elmer trapped for 50 years in Alaska)
Roy Mitinen
Sonny Mitinen
*Jess and Kathryn Knight (related to Tiny Knight, who operated the Ft. Egbert telegraph)
Steve Castoll
*Bill Lubey
George Beck
Anton and Esther Merley
Dave and Sue McCall

Eagle Village (all Athapaskan):
Jim Juneby
Matthew and Sarah Malcom
*Lysha Malcom (over 100 years of age)
Louise Paul
*Bob Stacey
Robert Lacey
Little John ("Whitewater Johnny")
Harry David
Lisha Lyman

Fairbanks: Paul White
Buzz Sinclair
Al Zachini - 1/2 mile, VanHorn Road
Ed Ganzer - General Delivery
Danny Agbaba - General Delivery
*Mrs. Engbret Johansen
*Mrs. Art Purdy
Bill Stroker
Ted Lowell
Leo Shofeld
*Mrs. Al Wright - Pioneers Home (Formerly of Tanacross)
*Nancy Traub Glaslow - Pioneers' Club

Healy Lake: Paul and Margaret Kirsteader

Jack Wade: *George Robinson

Juneau: *Mrs. Bert B. Green (wife of U.S. Commissioner at Jack Wade in 1930's and 1940's)
Chuck Herbert

Mentasta (all Athapaskan):
Fred John
Houston Sanford

Nabesna: Gene Henry

Northway (all Athapaskan):
Kenny Albert
Steve Northway
Walter Northway
Rose Maher

Steele Creek: Neil Thurneau

Tanacross (all Athapaskan):
Oscar and Martha Isaac
Bee Lake
Amy Lake (Phillips?)
Julius Paul
Charlie James
Annie Denny
*Titus Paul
*Silas Solomon

Tanacross (non-native):
*Tom Denny, Sr. (lived there 50+ years)

Tanana: Merton Atwood - Union Oil Co./airport

Tetlin (all Athapaskan):
Donald Joe
Patrick Joe
Charles David, Sr.

Tok: *Doug and Rita Euers
Seward and Bonnie Harbison
*Ralph and Mildred Sanford
Mr. and Mrs. Fred James
*Mr. and Mrs. Ray Scoby
Bob Roberts
Ellis Roberts
Paul McKim
Bill Seaton
*Millie Terwilliger
*Al and Roberta Stout
Art Baker
Wes Lathrop
Phil and Glynna Defresne

B. Out-of-State Residents

California
Brawley: *Mrs. C.W. Kershaw, 226 West _____
(lived in NCO quarters at Ft. Egbert in 1901)
Oceanside: *Henry McCary, 361 Alpine Lane
(soldier at Ft. Egbert)

Maryland
Rockville: *John B. Mertie, Jr., 9813 Watts Branch Drive, Glen Hills (U.S.G.S. geologist in Alaska in 1920's and 1930's)

New York
Mayville: *Pearl (Mrs. Syvert) Koland, Route 2
(former Chicken area resident)

Oregon
Portland: Frank Barr (early day pilot in interior Alaska)

Washington
Kennewick: Leonard Stampe, Post Office Drawer E
(former Fortymile miner)
Glenn Franklin (former Fortymile miner, may reside in Wenatchee, Washington)

Seattle: Louise Trafton (former Tok resident)
*H.W. McCurdy, 1001 Hope Bldg, 705 2nd Ave.
(father-in-law was General McManus, who helped establish Ft. Egbert)

C. Previously Contacted Informants

As has been mentioned, several local residents have participated in various surveys regarding the Fortymile Resource Area, and some are becoming less responsive to requests for information which duplicate previous inquiries. Consequently, the focus should be on establishing contacts with new informants who have not had the opportunity to contribute to Fortymile history. Many area residents will appreciate the opportunity to offer assistance to a worthwhile historical project.

This is not to say that previously contacted informants should be denied the opportunity to offer more insights to Fortymile history; rather, they should be asked to contribute new and different kinds of information - if they wish to participate at all.

Several informants already contacted should be given consideration as subjects for life histories. All have led interesting and unique lives, but several are approaching the age at which their health is beginning to deteriorate. In some cases they may leave the Fortymile area and become less accessible to researchers. If completion of life histories is considered a priority item as BLM historical research continues, these persons should be ranked high on the list of potential informants: Ole Hansen, Barney Hansen, Fred Whitehead, Paul Bytell, and Mary Johansen. All other informants are considered excellent prospects for life histories and should also be given consideration for such an endeavor.

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This intern report was read and accepted by a staff member at:

Agency: Bureau of Land Management-40 Mile Area

Address: P.O. Box 191
Tok, Alaska 99780

This report was completed by a WICHE intern. This intern's project was part of the Resources Development Internship Program administered by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

The purpose of the internship program is to bring organizations involved in community and economic development, environmental problems and the humanities together with institutions of higher education and their students in the West for the benefit of all.

For these organizations, the intern program provides the problem-solving talents of student manpower while making the resources of universities and colleges more available. For institutions of higher education, the program provides relevant field education for their students while building their capacity for problem-solving.

WICHE is an organization in the West uniquely suited for sponsoring such a program. It is an interstate agency formed by the thirteen western states for the specific purpose of relating the resources of higher education to the needs of western citizens. WICHE has been concerned with a broad range of community needs in the West for some time, insofar as they bear directly on the well-being of western peoples and the future of higher education in the West. WICHE feels that the internship program is one method for meeting its obligations within the thirteen western states. In its efforts to achieve these objectives, WICHE appreciates having received the generous support and assistance of the Economic Development Administration; the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation; the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Wyoming Office of Manpower Planning; and of innumerable local leaders and community organizations, including the agency that sponsored this intern project.

For further information, write Bob Hullinghorst, Director, Resources Development Internship Program, WICHE, P.O. Drawer 'P', Boulder, Colorado 80302 or call (303) 492-7177.

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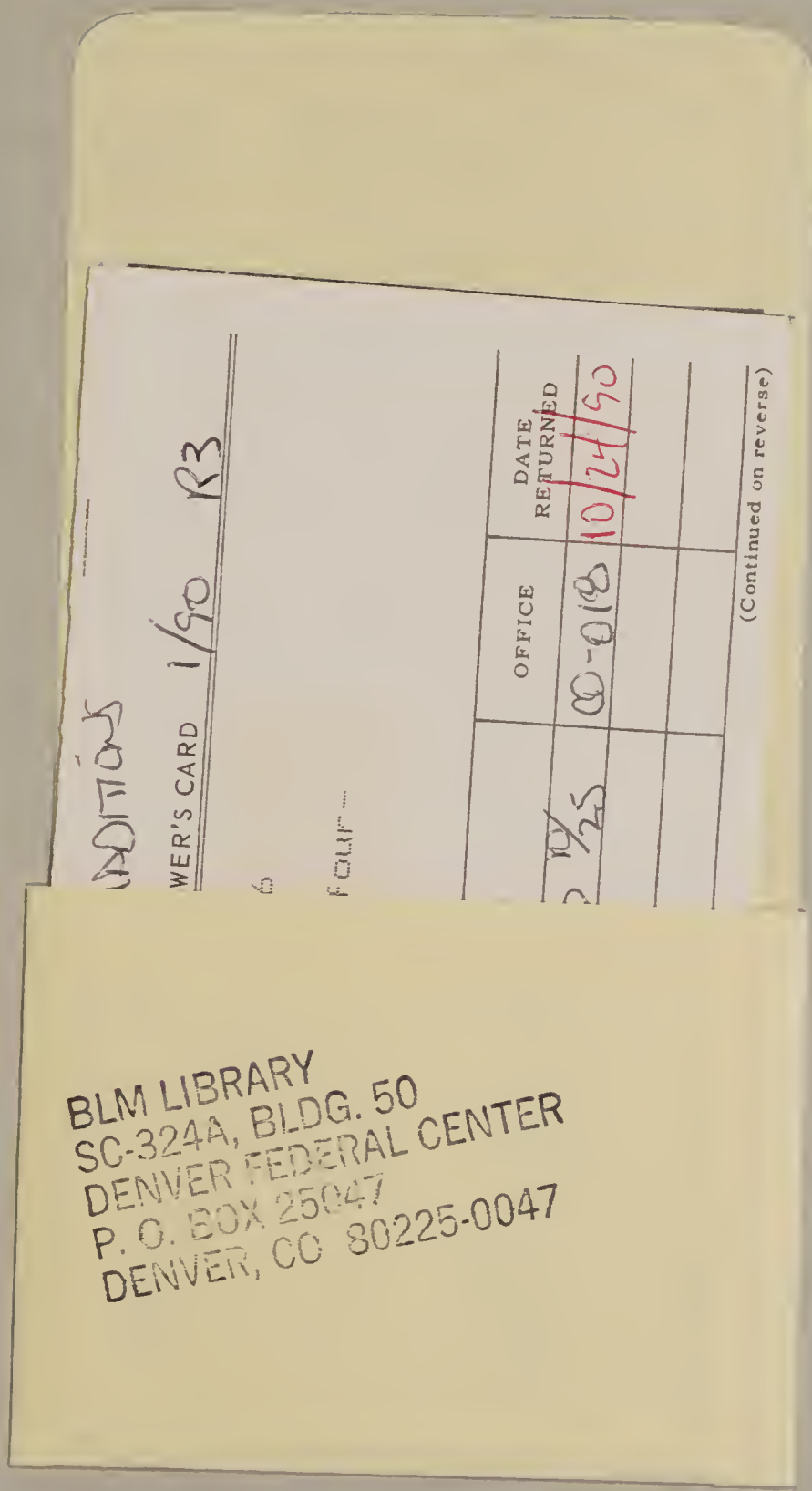
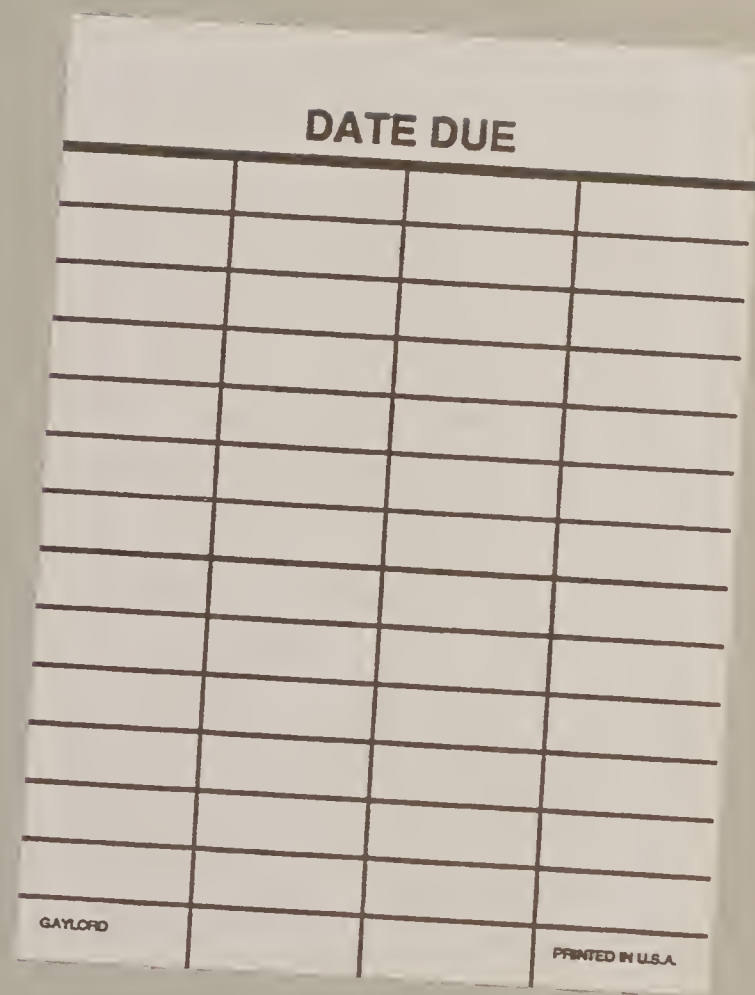
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